



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Elko Field Office  
3900 East Idaho Street  
Elko, Nevada 89801-4611

<http://www.nv.blm.gov>

In Reply Refer To:  
4130 (NV 012)

Parasol Ranching L.L.C. (7002 0860 0006 9272 1260)  
c/o Larry Schutte  
HC 67 Box 2034  
Wells, NV 89835

SEP 17 2002

Egbert Livestock L.L.C. (7002 0860 0006 9272 1277)  
c/o Scott Egbert  
HC 60 Box 135  
Wells, NV 89835

Dear Permittees:

The Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) for the Big Springs Allotment is enclosed.

The Proposed Multiple Use Decision describes the management actions for wildlife, livestock, and wild horse management for the Big Springs Allotment. The Final Multiple Use Decision allows for an appeal period of 30 days.

If you have any questions please call (775) 753-0200.

Sincerely yours,

CLINTON R. OKE,  
Assistant Field Manager  
Renewable Resources

cc: Vidler Water Co. (7002 0860 0006 9272 1048)  
Newmont Gold Company (7002 0860 0006 9272 1055)  
Nevada Division of Wildlife, Region II (7002 0860 0006 9272 1062)  
Nevada State Clearinghouse Dept. Of Administration (7002 0860 0006 9272 1079)  
Nevada Cattleman's Association (7002 0860 0006 9272 1086)  
Nevada Land and Resource Company (7002 0860 0006 9272 1093)  
Nevada State Division of Agriculture (7002 0860 0006 9272 1109)  
Elko Board of County Commissioners (7002 0860 0006 9272 1116)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (7002 0860 0006 9272 1123)  
Resource Concepts, Inc. (7002 0860 0006 9272 1130)  
Toiyabe Chapter Sierra Club (7002 0860 0006 9272 1147)  
Friends of Nevada Wilderness (7002 0860 0006 9272 1154)  
Charles and John Young (7002 0860 0006 9272 1161)  
Marti P. Hoots (7002 0860 0006 9272 1178)  
HTT Resource Advisors (7002 0860 0006 9272 1185)  
Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses (7002 0860 0006 9272 1192)  
Wild Horse Organized Assistance (7002 0860 0006 9272 1208)  
Fund for Animals, Rocky Mountain Coordinator (7002 0860 0006 9272 1215)  
Fund for Animals (7002 0860 0006 9272 1222)  
Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition (7002 0860 0006 9272 1239)  
Western Watersheds Project (7002 0860 0006 9272 1246)  
Committee for Idaho's High Desert (7002 0860 0006 9272 1253)  
Mike Volberg (7002 0860 0006 9272 1307)





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### **FINAL MULTIPLE USE DECISION FOR THE BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT**

Dear Permittee:

On September 26, 2000, the Big Springs Allotment Evaluation was issued to the public for comment. That evaluation analyzed monitoring information collected between 1977 and 2000 to determine progress in meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health and the multiple use objectives for the Big Springs Allotment, and to determine what changes in existing management may be required to meet those standards and objectives.

The following documents established the multiple use objectives which guide management of the public lands within the Big Springs Allotment: the Record of Decision for the Wells Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan (RMP) issued on 16 July 1985; the Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) issued on 15 September 1986; the RMP Elk Amendment issued on 14 February 1996; and the RMP Wild Horse and Burro Amendment issued on 2 August 1992.

In accordance with the grazing regulations, the Secretary of the Interior approved standards and guidelines for rangeland health for the Northeastern Great Basin Area of Nevada on February 12, 1997. These standards and guidelines reflect the stated goals of improving rangeland health while providing for the viability of the livestock industry.

Following the 30 day public comment period for the evaluation, the Elko Field Office carefully considered the comments received which prompted changes to the evaluation and proposed management actions. Upon completion of these changes, the management actions to be implemented on each allotment within the Big Springs Allotment were selected. The actions selected for implementation were described in the "Big Springs Allotment Management Action Selection Report (MASR)". The MASR also provided responses to public comments on the evaluation and describes the changes made to the evaluation and proposed management actions.

A Proposed Multiple Use Decision (PMUD) was issued for the Big Springs Allotment on 5 October 2001. The PMUD proposed to implement the actions selected for implementation in the

MASR. The affected permittees, agencies, and members of the interested public were given 15 days to protest the decision. Three timely protests were received, one from the Committee for Idaho's High Desert (dated 9 October 2001), one from Parasol Ranching LLC (dated 23 October 2001), and one from Western Watersheds Project (dated 25 October 2001). The Elko Field Office has carefully considered the points raised in each protest, and some changes to the evaluation have been made. The protest points raised and the BLM's responses are enclosed in a separate letter.

Through the consultation, coordination, and cooperation process (CCC), your input, as well as input from the interested public, has been considered in the allotment evaluation process. As a result of the evaluation conclusions and after consideration of input received through the CCC process, it has been determined that: 1) some of the multiple use objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health for the Big Springs Allotment are not being met, 2) changes in current livestock grazing management and wild horse management are required, 3) existing management of wildlife has not contributed to non-attainment of multiple use objectives and standards for rangeland health, and 4) deletions, modifications, and/or requantification of some allotment multiple use objectives are required as follows:

- 1. Modify and/or requantify the RPS and allotment specific objectives for the Big Springs Allotment. General land use plan objectives and Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health for Northeastern Nevada Great Basin Area will remain unchanged. Modification and/or requantification of objectives will allow for consolidation of objectives that are similar. Refer to Appendix 1 for a listing of those objectives that would be deleted and/or revised and for the complete list of the multiple use objectives to be evaluated at the next scheduled evaluation.**

**Rationale:** The Big Springs Allotment Evaluation summarized current grazing management, determined whether or not progress was being made toward attainment of the multiple use objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health, and provided recommendations for future management. The allotment specific objectives which were analyzed in the allotment evaluation were formulated based on management issues which existed in 1986 when the RPS was published. Based on monitoring data and conclusions presented in this allotment evaluation, it is necessary to modify and/or requantify the allotment specific objectives to address the following resource issues:

- upland range conditions
- lotic and lentic riparian conditions
- wildlife habitat conditions
- wild horse management

Monitoring studies will continue to be conducted and the effects of grazing will be evaluated periodically to determine if progress is being made in meeting the multiple use objectives and significant progress is being made toward attainment of the standards for rangeland health.

It has been determined that some of the multiple use objectives were not met and that livestock grazing and wild horse use on the public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines as identified in the conclusion section (Section V) of the Big Springs Allotment Evaluation.

In order to ensure progress towards and achieve the standards for rangeland health and multiple use objectives, changes in current livestock and wild horse use are required. **Therefore, my final decision is to implement the management actions identified below for livestock, wildlife, and wild horse management in the Big Springs Allotment.** These management actions will become effective on 1 March 2003.

## **I. LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT DECISION**

The following selected actions are expected to achieve significant progress towards and attainment of the multiple use objectives for the Big Springs Allotment and the Standards for Rangeland Health approved for the Northeastern Great Basin Area of Nevada. These actions will be implemented through the issuance of the Final Multiple Use Decision. Proposed range improvement projects will be subject to further NEPA review.

**1. Divide the Big Springs Allotment into two separate allotments called East and West Big Springs Allotments with the dividing line as shown on Map 1 in Appendix 2 of this decision. This line falls on the crest/watershed divide, or nearly so, of the Pequop Mountains. Please note that the boundary line immediately south of Interstate 80 encloses a portion of the west side within the East Big Springs Allotment, and a portion of the area immediately north of Pequop Summit and east of the R. 65/66 E. line is included within the West Big Springs Allotment. If fences are constructed to separate all or a portion of these two allotments, the dividing line created by the new fence(s) will be considered the actual allotment boundary.**

**Rationale:** The division line is based on the Rangeline Agreement authorized on September 5, 1990 with modifications as noted above. Currently the east and west sides of the Big Springs Allotment are identified as separate grazing use areas, under separate management regimes, by two permittees. This will establish this rangeline as the official allotment boundary.

The small area on the west side just south of Interstate 80 is included in the use area for the east side because this area is most easily grazed by cattle using the east side/Payne Basin area and will preclude the need for a fence to split cattle use by the two permittees in this area. The area immediately north of Pequop Summit and east of the R. 65/66 E. line associated with the Beacon Reservoir area is included within the West Big Springs Allotment because this area is part of the watershed on the west side and most conducive to livestock management when included within the west side.

**2. Establish the Total Number of AUMs of Permitted Use for Livestock, and the Appropriate Management Level (AML) for Wild Horses within the Big Springs Allotment as follows:**

| Livestock Active Permitted Use and Wild Horse AML |   |   |                                       |                       |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pasture   | Pre-Evaluation Stocking Rates               |   | Post-Evaluation Stocking Rates/AML    |                       |
|   | Livestock Permitted Use (AUMs) <sup>1</sup> | Wild Horse Initial Stocking Level (AUMs) <sup>1</sup> | Livestock Active Permitted Use (AUMs) | Wild Horse AML (AUMs) |
| Independence Valley                               | 3,651                                       | N/A   | 3,050 (2,750) <sup>2</sup>            | N/A                   |
| Holborn   | 450   | N/A   | 550                                   | N/A                   |
| North Pequop Mountain                             | 1,866                                       | N/A   | 1,168 (West Side)                     | N/A                   |
|   |   |   | 1,244 (East Side)                     | N/A                   |
| Upper Squaw Creek Riparian                        | Part of the North Pequop Mtn. Pasture       | N/A   | To Be Determined                      | N/A                   |
| Squaw Creek Ranch                                 | 55 <sup>4</sup>                             | N/A   | 55                                    | N/A                   |
| Lower Squaw Creek Ranch                           | 6 <sup>4</sup>                              | N/A   | 100                                   | N/A                   |
| East Squaw Creek                                  | 320   | N/A   | 180                                   | N/A                   |
| Windmill Seeding                                  | 68 <sup>3</sup>                             | N/A   | 390                                   | N/A                   |
| Railroad Field                                    | 63  | N/A   | 230                                   | N/A                   |
| Collar and Elbow                                  | 2,243                                       | N/A   | 1,181                                 | N/A                   |
| Shafter   | 6,633                                       | 768   | 3,193                                 | 408-672               |
| East Pequop Bench                                 | 2,424                                       | N/A   | 2,424 <sup>5</sup>                    | N/A                   |



|                               |                                  |     |                                  |     |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|-----|
| North of Home                 | 90                               | N/A | 90                               | N/A |
| Payne Basin & Six-Mile Canyon | 422                              | N/A | 350                              | N/A |
| Fenced Federal Range (FFR)    | 20 (West Side)<br>17 (East Side) | N/A | 20 (West Side)<br>17 (East Side) | N/A |

1 Livestock AUMs based on adjudications from the 1937 - 40 range surveys.  
The initial herd size for the Goshute Herd Management Area (HMA) was 160 wild horses or 1,920 AUMs for 12 months. Approximately 40% of the horses in the HMA use the Shafter Pasture of the Big Springs Allotment for a total of 768 AUMs for 12 months.  
2 3,050 AUMs authorized if stockwater is hauled to the northwest portion of the valley or a new water source is developed in this area.  
3 AUMs based on range survey data prior to seeding.  
4 This pasture was all private land prior to the BSR Land Exchange of 1999. AUMs based on range survey data.  
5 Subject to temporary reductions due to closure during the Big Springs Fire Rehabilitation.

Based on the table above, livestock permitted use for the West and East Big Springs Allotments will be as shown in the table below:

| Summary of Changes to Livestock Permitted Use |                                     |   |                                      |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Livestock Permittee                           | Pre-Evaluation Permitted Use (AUMs) | Post-Evaluation Active Permitted Use (AUMs) | Post Evaluation Suspended Use (AUMs) |
| Egbert Livestock LLC (West Side)              | 5,385 <sup>1</sup>                  | 4,788 <sup>1,3</sup>                        | 597 <sup>3</sup>                     |
| Parasol Ranching LLC (East Side)              | 12,887 (16,598) <sup>1,2</sup>      | 9,454 (12,175) <sup>1,2,3</sup>             | 3,433 (4423) <sup>2,3</sup>          |

1 Includes FFR AUMs.  
2 All of the stocking rates were evaluated with actual use data reported prior to the change in AUMs prompted by the BSR Land Exchange and therefore do not reflect the increase in permitted use following the BSR Land Exchange. The numbers in parenthesis ( - ) show permitted use adjustments as a result of the BSR Land Exchange.  
3 The AUMs credited to owned and leased private lands intermingled with public lands will be reduced by the same percentage as public land permitted use.

The AUM reduction from each permit as a result of this action will be placed into the suspended category.

**Rationale: Independence Valley Pasture** - The stocking rate for this pasture was based primarily on the actual use and utilization data from 1997, 1998 and 1999. Data were available to calculate carrying capacities for these years. In addition, these years are most representative of stocking levels following the development of two new water sources (Miners Well and the Honor Camp Troughs) and the increase in AUMs following reseeding of the Wood Hills Burn. The calculations of stocking rates from 1997 and 1999 represent spring use while the data from 1998 best represents fall/winter use. Spring and fall/winter use were combined to represent the capacity of this pasture. The 1997 calculated capacity was 1,724 AUMs and the capacity calculated for 1999 was 840 AUMs. The average between these two years is 1,282 AUMs for spring use. The 1998 calculations show a capacity of 1,760 AUMs for fall/winter use. The combination of 1,282 AUMs for spring use plus 1,760 AUMs from fall/winter use equals 3,042 total AUMs; however, some adjustments were made to account for the kinds of precipitation years from which the data were derived and the availability of additional forage due to water hauling. The data from 1997 and 1998 represent above average production years, therefore the capacity in an average precipitation year would be somewhat less. Conversely, additional forage is available in the northwest portion of this pasture that is not represented in the calculated capacities. Taking into account these two factors, permitted use will be authorized up to 3,050 AUMs if the permittee hauls water to the northwest use area, or a new permanent water is developed; however, if water is not provided to the northwest use area, permitted use will be authorized up to 2,750 AUMs.

**Holborn Pasture** - The information available from 1999 was used as the basis for the stocking rate. Use patterns during 1999 reflected pasture wide use during an average forage production year. The calculated capacity for 1999 ranged from 552 AUMs at key area 4306-04 to 876 AUMs at key area 4306-03. The limiting factor was 552 AUMs and therefore 550 AUMs was selected as the stocking rate.

**North Pequop Mountain Pasture** - The information available for 1997 and 1999 was used as the basis for the stocking rate(s).

On the west side of the pasture, data from key areas 4306-8 and 4306-9 in 1997 were most representative of pasture capacities when the south end is used first under a deferred rotation strategy, and data from key areas 4306-5 and 4306-10 from 1999 were most representative of pasture capacity when the north end is used first under a deferred rotation strategy. The capacity of the west side of the pasture based on grazing the south end first was 1,396 AUMs and the capacity based on using the north end first was 940 AUMs. The average of these two values is 1,168 AUMs which was selected as the stocking rate.

On the east side of the pasture, there were only data from 1999. The calculated capacity from 1999, an average precipitation year, was 1,244 AUMs which was selected as the stocking rate.

Upper Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture - Under the interim grazing plan, this area will be part of the North Pequop Mountain Pasture. This pasture will be created by fencing described under the final grazing plan for the East Big Springs Allotment. This pasture will be rested initially until proper functioning condition is achieved and then be opened for grazing under stubble height/utilization limits. The AUMs in this pasture will be defined through monitoring once it is authorized for grazing use.

Squaw Creek Ranch Field - This was a separate private pasture prior to completion of the BSR Land Exchange in 1999 and there is no capacity data; therefore, the capacity assigned to this acreage by the range survey is selected until the capacity can be defined through monitoring.

Lower Squaw Creek Ranch Field - This field was also a separate private pasture prior to the BSR Land Exchange. This field is irrigated and grows an abundance of grasses. This field is approximately 50 acres in size with an estimated rating of 2 acres/AUM which results in the selected capacity of 100 AUMs.

East Squaw Creek Pasture - The average capacity, based on two widely divergent years, was 179 AUMs. This was considered a reasonable stocking level based on the fact that the 640 acres of seeding on the south end supports most of the use in this pasture. Assigning a 5 acre/AUM average value to the capacity of this seeding results in a seeding capacity of 120 AUMs. The difference between the 120 AUMs provided by the seeding and the average calculated capacity of this pasture leaves a 60 AUM capacity to the remainder of the pasture. This falls short of the range survey capacity, however livestock do not prefer to stay in the northern part of this pasture. A conservative approach to stocking this pasture during the growing season is prudent considering there is a sage grouse strutting ground in the area and it would be important to leave much of the native grass growth for nesting cover. If the proposed drift fence is constructed within this pasture, livestock use of much of the native range will expand to the north and also be easier to manage for periods of use separate from the seeding on the south end.

Windmill Seeding - The selected capacity of 390 AUMs for this seeding is based on high levels of utilization. When the cattle graze this pasture, they graze the relatively small area of Russian wildrye south of the well first, and graze it heavily before making much use of the larger seeding consisting of Russian wildrye and crested wheatgrass. Observations of the density and health of the Russian wildrye indicate it has remained healthy under heavy use when periodically deferred from use during all or a portion of the growing season. Therefore, continuing in this manner is expected to be compatible with meeting objectives.

Railroad Field - The two years of actual use and utilization data show widely differing estimates of capacity which average 291 AUMs. Recent observations of use in this pasture indicate the range survey rating of 63 AUMs is low; however, the calculated capacity of 540 AUMs in 1997 is high considering it was an above average precipitation year. The selected stocking rate of 230 AUMs is considered a reasonable estimate of the average capacity considering the acreage in this pasture.



Collar and Elbow Pasture - The selected capacity is based on data from 1999. In 1999, all the wells were operated whereas it is unclear from previous years. Therefore, the capacity of 1,181 AUMs is selected.

Shafter Pasture - The appropriate management level for wild horses was based on data from utilization and actual use and the objective of 10% use prior to the entry of livestock. The selected stocking rate for livestock is also based on actual use and utilization. The AML for wild horses and livestock stocking level total the average capacity calculations for end of winter use.

East Pequop Bench Pasture - The selected stocking rate is based on the range survey ratings. There was insufficient information collected during the evaluation period to analyze capacity.

North of Home Pasture - The selected stocking rate is based on grazing privileges adjudicated following the range surveys. There was insufficient information collected during the evaluation period to analyze capacity.

Payne Basin & Six Mile Pastures - The selected stocking rate is based on the average calculated capacity of the two key areas. The average for key area 4306-16 was 382 AUMs, and the average for key area 4306-17 was 315 AUMs. The average of these two numbers is 350 AUMs. When stocking this pasture, the levels of use need to be balanced between the areas represented by the two key areas. More data is needed to draw any conclusions about stocking rates for the Six-Mile Canyon area.

Fenced Federal Range - The AUM values for the FFR parcels are based on the range survey ratings.

### **3. Implement Livestock Grazing Management Systems within the West and East Big Springs Allotments as follows:**

#### **a. West Big Springs Allotment**

Deferred rotation grazing will be applied to all pastures. The management practices to be applied will limit use so as not to exceed the utilization objectives and allow the preferred forage plants in each pasture/use area to frequently complete their growth stages and disseminate seed. The final grazing system incorporates new water sources to expand grazing distribution and seedings to increase forage and habitat around the water sources. The Map of Proposed Range Improvements can be found in Appendix 2 and shows the approximate locations of proposed projects. The interim and final grazing plans are described below.

#### ***Interim Grazing Plan***

Independence Valley Pasture - Implement deferred rotation grazing practices amongst use areas within this pasture. Some *use areas* will be grazed in the spring/early summer and the remaining use areas grazed in the late summer/fall/winter/early spring. Generally, areas grazed in the spring/early

summer of one year will be grazed in the late summer/fall/winter/early spring of the next year, and areas grazed in the fall/winter of one year will be grazed in the spring/early summer the following year. Use areas will be associated with the water sources in this pasture. There are no fences that separate use areas in this pasture. Planned grazing of a use area will generally be controlled by turning on and off stock water. With the exception of the water provided by springs at the Warm Springs Ranch, the remainder of the stock water in this pasture is provided by wells. The permittee plans to pipe water from Wadel Spring, located west of the allotment boundary in the northwest part of the pasture, and place a trough on the West Big Springs Allotment side of the boundary fence (this will all be done on leased private lands). The permittee also plans to haul water to the northwest portion of the valley/bench and on the bench in the northeast corner. The southeast part of Independence Valley associated with Boxcar Well will normally be reserved for late fall/winter use annually. *Each year, prior to spring use, the permittee will meet with the Elko Office to plan when the different use areas will be grazed for the year.* An example of the rotation is shown in the table below.

| Example of the Independence Valley Pasture Rotation   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| USE AREAS   | YEAR 1   | YEAR 2   |
| Boxcar Well   | Late Fall/Winter<br>(12/01 - 03/31)                        | Late Fall/Winter<br>(12/01 - 03/31)                        |
| North Boxcar Well<br>Miners Well<br>Rattlesnake Well<br>NE Water Haul Site<br>Honor Camp<br>Troughs   | Spring/Early Summer<br>(04/01 - 06/30)                     | Late Summer/Fall/Winter/Early<br>Spring<br>(09/01 - 03/31) |
| Section 12 Well<br>Warm Springs<br>Johnson Well<br>NW Water Haul Site   | Late Summer/Fall/Winter/Early<br>Spring<br>(09/01 - 03/31) | Spring/Early Summer<br>(04/01 - 06/30)                     |
| The private field at the Warm Springs Ranch is often grazed in the late summer/fall offering an additional use area. This field is currently leased by the permittee. |  |  |

Holborn Pasture - Between mid May and early July, cattle will be moved from the Independence Valley Pasture into the Holborn Pasture north of Interstate 80. The deferred rotation plan calls for two years of use beginning as early as mid May followed by two years of use beginning in July. During years one and two, the cattle will be moved into the pasture as early as mid May. In years three and four, the cattle will be moved into the pasture in early July.

The years the cattle are moved into this pasture in early July are considered the years of

deferment as most of the forage plants will be at seedripe or seed dissemination.

The length of time cattle graze in this pasture will fluctuate. During those years of average to above average precipitation, there would be water to achieve good distribution and adequate forage production for the cattle to remain in this pasture for most or all of the authorized period of use. During those years of below average precipitation, cattle may remain for only a short period of time (two weeks) before being moved to the North Pequop Mountain pasture. The North Pequop Mountain Pasture is higher in elevation and generally receives more precipitation than the Holborn Pasture and thus water and forage production is more dependable. Regardless of whether the cattle move from the Holborn Pasture early in the authorized use period or remain in the pasture for the full period of use, the deferred rotation systems for both the Holborn and North Pequop Mountain pastures will allow the forage plants to remain healthy. The planned rotation in use periods is displayed below.

| Holborn Pasture Rotation of Use Periods |               |
|---|---------------|
| YEAR 1 & 2                              | YEAR 3 & 4    |
| 05/15 - 09/30                           | 07/01 - 09/30 |

North Pequop Mountain Pasture - This pasture is the primary summer range for the cattle operation as well as a major use area and travel corridor for mule deer. The elk population has also been increasing, and there is sage grouse habitat. Controlling the use levels on the forage grasses and bitterbrush (important shrub for deer browse) are primary considerations.

This pasture will receive deferment from livestock use in two ways. Cattle use will be rotated between the north and south ends of this pasture, and secondly, cattle will remain in the Holborn Pasture until some time in July in some years before moving into the North Pequop Mountain Pasture.

The deferred rotation plan calls for the cattle to begin their use at the south end for two years in a row. This area is associated with Ralph Spring, West Spring, Rocky Point Spring, Beacon Spring, and West Squaw Creek Well. The permittee will move cattle drifting into the north end back to the south end in a timely manner; however, the cattle don't tend to drift to the north end since there is only one spring at the far north end and it is somewhat lower in elevation. Some of the cattle grazing the south end will likely drift onto the east side of this pasture where the adjoining permittee grazes; therefore, the livestock operator on the west side will be responsible for monitoring his cattle drift and move his cattle back onto the west side in a timely manner. Removing cattle drifting into the East Squaw Creek and Upper Beacon Spring areas will be particularly important the first year or two prior to the installation of riparian management fences in these areas. On 8/1 or later, most of the cattle will be spread across the northern part of the west side. The permittee will make a good faith effort to move and keep the cattle in the northern use

areas at this time to reduce the potential of cattle drifting onto the east side of this pasture. By the end of September, the cattle are moved out of this pasture.

During the third and fourth years, the cattle will begin their grazing on the north end for two years in a row. This area is associated with Independence Well, Pequop Spring and Pequop Well. The cattle tend to drift into the south end where there are several springs and higher elevation country; therefore, the permittee will move cattle drifting into the south end back to the north end in a timely manner. Beginning on 8/1 or later, most of the cattle will be spread across the south part of the pasture. Some of the cattle grazing the south end will likely drift onto the east side of this pasture where the adjoining permittee grazes; therefore, the livestock operator on the west side will be responsible for monitoring cattle drift and move the cattle back onto the west side in a timely manner.

The table below displays the planned rotation in use periods.

| North Pequop Mountain Pasture Rotation in Use Areas |               |               |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| USE AREA  | YEARS 1 & 2   | YEARS 3 & 4   |
| North   | 08/01 - 09/30 | 05/15 - 09/30 |
| South   | 05/15 - 09/30 | 08/01 - 09/30 |

***Final Grazing Plan***

The final grazing plan will continue the deferred rotation practices described under the interim systems above. The final grazing plan differs from the interim grazing plan only by the proposed addition of permanent water locations and seedings in various locations along with an allotment boundary fence on a portion of the North Pequop Mountain Pasture. The allotment boundary fence and additional water developments and seedings are described below by pasture. Please refer to the maps in Appendix 2.

Independence Valley Pasture -

- (1). Develop a new water location in the northwest part of the valley, between Interstate 80 and Johnson Well. Perennial grasses are common along the upper bench and mountain.
- (2). Seed up to 4,000 acres of public land associated with existing and proposed water locations. The seed mix will include forage grasses, shrubs/half-shrubs and forbs. The areas to be seeded will be lower bench and valley big sagebrush and rabbitbrush areas poor in grasses and other forage. The locations of areas and acres of proposed seeding will be more specifically identified through the environmental analysis process on individual projects.
- (3). Monitor the use and condition of Hogan Spring/seep located on the west bench of the



Pequop Mountains and determine if protective measures should be taken protect the water source if wild horses continue to occupy this area or from cattle use.

(4). Consider a fence that will prevent cattle from drifting back to the Warm Springs Ranch area from other use areas.

Holborn Pasture -

(5). Seed up to 1,000 acres of public land associated with the NDOT well adjacent to the Interstate 80 exit. The seed mix will include forage grasses, shrubs/half-shrubs and forbs. The areas to be seeded will be the big sagebrush area poor in grasses and other forage.

North Pequop Mountain Pasture -

(6). Construct a boundary fence between the East and West Big Springs Allotments within the North Pequop Mountain Pasture. The fence will be approximately three miles long and run along the boundary line from Interstate 80 at Pequop Summit to Rocky Point, with a short gap fence in the canyon immediately north of Rocky Point. This fence will be designed as a let-down fence to be let-down by 9/30 and put back up prior to the entry of livestock the following year. This fence will also be part of an interior pasture fence proposed for the east side of this pasture as described under the grazing management practices for the East Big Springs Allotment below. The livestock permittees will be responsible for letting the fence down and putting it back up in a timely manner.

(7). Develop a new water location on the north Pequop Mountain bench a couple of miles west of Pequop Spring. Perennial grasses are common in this area.

(8). Develop a new water location on the north Pequop Mountain bench one to two miles east of Pequop Spring. Perennial grasses are common in this area. *Sage grouse strutting grounds are located near this new proposed use area; therefore, this water will not be operated earlier than July 1 so that all of the grass growth each year is available for hiding cover for sage grouse nesting and brood rearing activities.*

(9). Add a water storage tank and/or repair the reservoir at Pequop Well so there is adequate storage to water both cattle and elk.

(10). Evaluate the water development designs of the spring developments on public lands in this pasture and determine if the spring developments warrant modification to encourage the growth of riparian vegetation. Nearly all of the springs in this pasture were developed by capturing all of the water from the spring source and piping it to a trough which precludes the growth of riparian habitat at or near the spring source.

The Nevada Division of Wildlife and the interested public will be consulted prior to the approval of the above proposed projects. Required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation will be completed prior to the development and redesign of projects on public

lands.

**Rationale:** Deferred rotation grazing is intended to help the forage plants remain healthy, provide seed to populate the plant communities for watershed stability and long-term sustainable use for livestock, wildlife and other multiple uses.

The deferred rotation plan for the N. Pequop Mountain Pasture in particular is also intended to lessen the use of bitterbrush on the south end where cattle prefer to be in the summer.

The proposed boundary fence that will separate the West Big Springs Allotment from the East Big Springs Allotment in the North Pequop Mountain Pasture will prevent the drift of cattle between the two allotments and also serve as part of the pasture management fences proposed for the east side. The fence will be designed as a let-down fence to be let down before the opening of the rifle hunting season on mule deer. Dropping down the fence wire is necessary to allow deer free movement through the area during the hunting season as well as reduce the need for some fence repairs from elk passing through the area.

Fencing the use area associated with the Warm Springs Ranch in the Independence Valley Pasture may be valuable in controlling the degree of utilization on key forage plants by preventing cattle from drifting to this area from other use areas in the valley.

The proposed water developments will expand grazing use and offer more use areas with which to plan deferred rotation strategies. In addition, by not operating the proposed water development east of Pequop Spring before July 1, new grass growth each year will be available as hiding cover for sage grouse nesting and brood rearing activities. Adding to the water storage capability at Pequop Well will improve the ability of this water source to support both cattle and elk use.

The proposed seedings will increase forage production and diversity for livestock and wildlife, particularly antelope, and provide a forage reserve to provide flexibility to manage for native plant community objectives

**b. East Big Springs Allotment**

Deferred rotation grazing will be applied to all pastures receiving grazing use during the critical growing season. Pastures receiving only fall or winter use will be deferred from grazing during the growing season every year. The management practices to be applied will limit use so as not to exceed the utilization objectives and allow the preferred forage plants in each pasture/use area to frequently complete their growth stages and disseminate seed. The final grazing system incorporates new water sources to expand grazing distribution, new seedings to increase forage and habitat around the water sources, and additional fencing to protect riparian habitat and new seedings to improve the management of cattle under the deferred rotation practices. The Map of Proposed Range Improvements can be found in Appendix 2 and shows the approximate locations of proposed projects. The interim and final grazing systems are described below.

| <i>Interim Grazing System(s)</i>  |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Periods-Of-Use By Pasture   |  |  |
| PASTURE/USE AREA  | YEARS 1 & 2  | YEARS 3 & 4  |
| Shafter   | 10/01 - 4/15   | 10/01 - 4/15   |
| East Pequop Bench<br>North Bench<br>South Bench/Hardy Creek<br>Pipeline | 03/01 - 06/30 <sup>1</sup><br>Period of use within each<br>use area to be defined on<br>an annual basis. | 03/01 - 06/30 <sup>1</sup><br>Period of use within each<br>use area to be defined on<br>an annual basis. |
| Payne Basin/Six-Mile Canyon   | 05/16 - 09/30  | 07/01 - 09/30  |
| East Squaw Creek  | 04/01 - 10/15<br>Period of use to be<br>defined on an annual<br>basis.                                   | 04/01 - 10/15<br>Period of use to be defined<br>on an annual basis.                                      |
| North Pequop Mountain<br>East Beacon/Upper Squaw Creek<br>Baker Spring  | 05/01 - 07/31<br>07/01 - 09/30   | 05/01 - 07/31<br>07/01 - 09/30   |
| Windmill Seeding  | 07/01 - 10/31  | 07/01 - 10/31  |
| Railroad  | 07/01 - 10/31  | 07/01 - 10/31  |
| Squaw Creek Ranch   | Up to 3 Weeks<br>05/01 - 07/31   | Up to 3 Weeks<br>05/01 - 07/31   |
| Lower Squaw Creek Ranch   | Up to 3 Weeks<br>08/01 - 10/31   | Up to 3 Weeks<br>08/01 - 10/31   |
| Collar & Elbow  | 08/15 - 01/31  | 08/15 - 01/31  |
| North of Home   | Period of use to be<br>defined on an annual<br>basis.  | Period of use to be defined<br>on an annual basis.   |

<sup>1</sup> A fire rehabilitation seeding was completed for a portion of the North Bench use area in the Fall of 2000. This rehabilitation area is closed to livestock use for two growing seasons or until seeding establishment criteria have been met.



Shafter Pasture - This is the primary pasture for winter/early spring use. Cattle will graze this pasture beginning in November. Many of the cattle graze the northern part of this pasture in November called the Silver Zone area and are then moved south to the use areas associated with Shafter Well #1, Shafter Well, and Shafter Well #2. The cattle remain in the Shafter Wells area up to mid April. However, if snowmelt/rains provide enough water in the late winter/early spring, the Shafter Wells will be turned off and the cattle moved to the west side of the Shafter Pasture into the greasewood plains and sagebrush draws to graze. The cattle are moved out of the Shafter Pasture and into the East Pequop Bench Pasture in March to mid April.

East Pequop Bench Pasture - Fire rehabilitation actions following the Big Springs Fire of 2000 resulted in the installation of a fence on the south end of the fire and seeding the burn area. The fence separates the northern part of the east Pequop bench from the remainder of the pasture. The fire rehabilitation seeding is within this North Bench use area and is closed to livestock grazing for at least two growing seasons or until the seeding establishment criteria have been met. While the North Bench use area is closed to livestock use, the South Bench/Hardy Creek use area and the Pipeline use area (east of the Big Springs Ranch) will be available for livestock use.

The grazing of each use area will be planned annually. The permittee will meet with Elko Field Office personnel prior to use in this pasture to discuss and gain the Bureau's concurrence on the planned grazing schedule. Deferred grazing use of each use area during the critical growing season two out of every four years is the goal; however, if we find that insufficient forage exists to defer each of the use areas (South Bench/Hardy or Pipeline) while the North Use Area is closed for fire rehabilitation, use will be planned so that utilization of key forage species will not exceed 40% use by the end of the critical growth period. When the North Bench use area is opened to livestock use following fire rehabilitation, this area will be included in the annual plan for grazing use in this pasture.

Payne Basin Pasture - This pasture will receive two years of use which includes the critical growing season followed by two years of deferred use.

The riparian areas in this pasture are associated with Adele Spring, Milk House Spring, and Upper and Lower Nanny Creek Springs. The functioning condition of these springs fluctuates from proper functioning condition during wet cycles to functioning-at-risk during dry cycles. Since these springs experience noticeably downward trends during dry cycles, permanent fencing will be installed around these springs/meadows between 2003 and 2004.

Six Mile Canyon Pasture - This pasture will receive two years of use which includes the critical growing season followed by two years of deferred use. If this pasture is grazed annually during the critical growth period of the key forage species (5/15 - 7/15), utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 40%. If this pasture is deferred at least two out of four years until 7/15, utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 50%.

East Squaw Creek Pasture - The grazing in this pasture will be planned annually. The permittee will meet with Elko Field Office personnel prior to use in this pasture to discuss and gain the Bureau's concurrence on the planned grazing schedule.

The South Seeding portion of this pasture will be grazed each year between 04/01 and 10/15. The South Seeding will commonly be grazed in the spring prior to the cattle being moved into the North Pequop Mountain Pasture, and grazed again in the late summer/fall as the cattle come off the summer range. Use during late summer/fall depends on the level of use made in the spring and the degree of regrowth available for later use.

The native portion of this pasture will be grazed in conjunction with the seeding on the south end; however, use in the native area is expected to be light because most of the cattle tend to graze the South Seeding portion of this pasture. However, if the level of grazing use on the native key forage grasses at key area 4306-14 exceeds the light utilization category by the end of the growing season for two years in a row, or more than two out of four consecutive years, use on the native area will be deferred until 07/01 for two out of four consecutive years.

North Pequop Mountain Pasture - This pasture is the primary summer range for the cattle operation as well as a major use area and travel corridor for mule deer. The elk population has also been increasing, and there is sage grouse habitat. The portion of this pasture associated with Upper East Squaw Creek and East Beacon Spring encompasses most of the riparian areas within the pasture. Controlling the use levels on the riparian habitat as well as forage grasses and bitterbrush (important shrub for deer browse) are primary considerations.

In order to begin making significant progress toward proper functioning condition of riparian habitat in this pasture prior to construction of the riparian management fences, it will be important to leave some of the perennial herbaceous riparian growth to help stabilize and expand the riparian area. Therefore, management will be directed at achieving the following stubble height objective during the interim:

- Stubble Height of Herbaceous Riparian Species: A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank and wet meadow areas at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.

Deferred rotation grazing will be applied to use areas within this pasture. Riparian management fences and water development modifications are proposed under the final grazing system/practices described below. In the interim, prior to the installation of riparian protection fences, livestock will graze the upper East Squaw Creek and East Beacon Spring areas between 5/1 and 07/31 and then moved north to the Baker Spring/Pipeline area. The Baker Spring/Pipeline area will be grazed from as early as 07/01 - 09/30 in conjunction with the Railroad and Windmill Seeding Fields. The permittee will be responsible for monitoring cattle drift outside the planned use area(s) and moving them back to the planned use area(s) in a timely manner. Removing cattle drifting back into the East Squaw Creek and East Beacon Spring areas

will be particularly important prior to the installation of the proposed pasture and/or riparian management fences in these areas.

Railroad Field and Windmill Seeding Field - The interim system calls for these two fields to be used in conjunction with the Baker Spring use area in the North Pequop Mountain Pasture. These two fields will be needed to supplement the forage for summer use when the cattle are not to be grazing the Upper East Squaw Creek and East Beacon Spring use areas in the North Pequop Mountain Pasture.

Squaw Creek Ranch Field - This field includes a portion of East Squaw Creek and will be managed as a riparian pasture with use limited to no more than three weeks. Monitoring of the utilization on streambank herbaceous riparian plants and willows will be used to determine if further adjustments will be made in order to achieve proper functioning condition and habitat objectives. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office to plan when this area will be grazed.* Management will be directed at achieving riparian habitat objectives including proper functioning condition. Annual stubble height/utilization limits on herbaceous riparian vegetation and willows will be used to tailor the period of use. These annual stubble height/utilization limits are described as follows:

- Stubble Height of Herbaceous Riparian Species: A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height for selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.

- Willow Utilization: Do not exceed thirty-five (35%) average utilization of the total current year's leader growth on the portion of the willow within five (5) feet of ground level by the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.

Lower Squaw Creek Ranch Field - This field has been irrigated to grow meadow grasses for livestock use in the late summer/fall. This field will continue to be irrigated by the permittee and grazed up to three weeks between 8/01 and 10/31. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office to plan when this area will be grazed.*

Collar and Elbow Pasture - This pasture will be used beginning on or after 8/15 for late summer/fall/early winter use. The valley portions of this pasture tends to be dusty when the dry surface is disturbed during the summer/fall. To avoid dust pneumonia in the calves, the permittee plans to wean the calves from the mother cows, which usually occurs beginning about August 20<sup>th</sup> and later, before placing the mother cows in this pasture.

North of Home Pasture - Use in this pasture is generally trailing cattle to and from other pastures; however, some cattle may periodically be held in this pasture for a longer period of time. *Because of the variability in the use of this pasture, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office each year to plan when this area will be grazed.* If this pasture is grazed annually during the critical growth period of the key forage species (5/1 - 6/30), utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 40%. If this pasture is deferred at least two out of four years until 7/1, utilization

will be managed so as not to exceed 50%. Planned use will be directed toward maintaining healthy forage plants, and a stable watershed for the Source Water Area Protection Zone associated with the watershed that supplies water to West Wendover, Nevada.

***Final Grazing Plan***

The final grazing plan will continue deferred rotation practices in those pastures scheduled for use during the critical growing season. The final grazing plan proposes some new pasture fences and riparian management fences as well as new water developments and seedings that enhance the ability to implement deferred rotation strategies. Since there will be enough changes in grazing use as a result of the proposed projects, the table below includes the proposed periods of use for all the pastures to facilitate an understanding of how the year-round operation will look under the final grazing plan.

| <b>Final Grazing Plan<br/>Periods Of Use By Pasture</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>PASTURE/USE AREA</b>                                 | <b>YEARS 1 &amp; 2</b>   | <b>YEARS 3 &amp; 4</b>   |
| Shafter   | 10/01 - 4/15   | 10/01 - 4/15   |
| East Pequop Bench<br>North Bench/Seeding/Long Canyon    | 05/01 - 07/15  | 03/01 - 05/15<br>09/01 - 12/31                                   |
| South Bench/Seeding/Hardy Creek                         | 05/01 - 07/15  | 03/01 - 05/15<br>09/01 - 12/31                                   |
| Pipeline Seeding  | 03/01 - 05/15<br>09/01 - 12/31                                   | 05/01 - 07/15  |
| Pipeline Native   | 03/01 - 05/15  | 05/01 - 07/15  |
| Payne Basin   | 05/16 - 09/30  | 07/01 - 09/30  |
| Six-Mile Canyon   | Period of use to be defined on an annual basis.                  | Period of use to be defined on an annual basis.                  |
| East Squaw Creek<br>South Seeding                       | 04/01 - 10/15<br>Period of use to be defined on an annual basis. | 04/01 - 10/15<br>Period of use to be defined on an annual basis. |
| North Native  | 05/01 - 10/15  | 07/01 - 10/15  |



| Final Grazing Plan<br>Periods Of Use By Pasture  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| PASTURE/USE AREA   | YEARS 1 & 2  | YEARS 3 & 4   |
| North Pequop Mountain<br>East Beacon/South Squaw Creek<br>North Squaw Creek/Baker Spring | 05/01 - 07/31<br>07/01 - 09/30   | 07/01 - 09/30<br>05/01 - 07/31                                      |
| Upper Squaw Creek Riparian   | Initially rest until PFC,<br>then<br>Up to 3 Weeks<br>05/01 - 07/31    | Initially rest until PFC,<br>then<br>Up to 3 Weeks<br>05/01 - 07/31 |
| Squaw Creek Ranch  | Up to 3 Weeks<br>05/01 - 07/31   | Up to 3 Weeks<br>05/01 - 07/31                                      |
| Lower Squaw Creek Ranch  | Up to 3 Weeks<br>08/01 - 10/31   | Up to 3 Weeks<br>08/01 - 10/31                                      |
| Windmill Seeding   | 04/01 - 10/31<br>Period of use to be<br>defined on an annual<br>basis. | 04/01 - 10/31<br>Period of use to be defined<br>on an annual basis. |
| Railroad   | 07/01 - 10/31  | 05/01 - 10/31   |
| Collar & Elbow   | 08/15 - 01/31  | 08/15 - 01/31   |
| North of Home  | Period of use to be<br>defined on an annual<br>basis.                  | Period of use to be defined<br>on an annual basis.                  |

Shafter Pasture - Planned use in this pasture will be the same as described under the interim grazing plan. This pasture is the primary winter/early spring use area. No new projects are proposed.

East Pequop Bench Pasture - Under the final grazing plan, the fire rehabilitation fence and seeding have already created the North Bench use area. Additional projects are also proposed to implement the final grazing plan. These proposed projects are as follows:

- (1). Construct a drift fence (100') near the bottom of Long Canyon.
- (2). Add an 8,000 gallon water storage tank to Burnt Well.
- (3). Develop a seeding of up to 3,000 acres within the area burned in the Oasis Fire located

within the South Bench use area. Seeded species will include perennial forage grasses, shrubs/half shrubs, and forbs.

- (4). Construct a reservoir in the vicinity of South Well to catch spring runoff, and add an 8,000 gallon water storage tank to South Well.
- (5). Develop a new well in the lower Hardy Creek area in the vicinity of sections 15 or 22, T. 34 N., R. 66 E.
- (6). Develop a seeding of up to 4,000 acres north of the West Wendover water pipeline. Seeded species will include perennial forage grasses, shrubs/half shrubs, and forbs.
- (7). Construct approximately seven (7) miles of fence to encompass the new seeding north of the pipeline.
- (8). Install four pipeline extensions of approximately one and one-half miles each. Two extensions will run north from the West Wendover water pipeline to provide water to the new seeding area, and two extension will run south to water the native range.

The final grazing plan for the East Pequop Bench Pasture will continue deferred rotation practices during the critical growing season (5/16 - 6/30) as shown in the table above. With the addition of the proposed projects, late summer and fall use is also proposed.

Payne Basin Pasture - This pasture will continue to receive two years of use which includes the critical growing season followed by two years of deferred use. Development of additional grazing capacity within the East Pequop Bench Pasture, as described above, will support these cattle during those years when this pasture is deferred until 07/01. The proposed projects are described below.

- (9). Adele, Milk House, and Upper and Lower Nanny Springs will be permanently fenced.
- (10). There are also a couple spring developments that capture all the water from the source and pipe it to a trough. Therefore, the water development designs of these spring developments on public lands will be evaluated to determine if the spring developments warrant modification to encourage the growth of riparian vegetation.

Six-Mile Canyon - Grazing in this canyon will be planned on an annual basis to take into account the availability of water. Grazing will be authorized periodically when water is available in the reservoir(s) as an alternative use area to Payne Basin. If this pasture is grazed annually during the critical growth period of the key forage species (5/15 - 7/15), utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 40%. If this pasture is deferred at least two out of four years until 7/15, utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 50%.

- (11). The only new project will be a drift fence near the bottom of the canyon.

(12). The existing reservoir part way up the canyon will be repaired and the reservoirs at the top of the canyon will be enlarged where feasible. These reservoirs catch snow melt/runoff but are not associated with any perennial water flows.

East Squaw Creek Pasture - New projects proposed for this pasture include the following:

(13). Construct a drift fence that will run easterly from the lower Squaw Creek Field to the fence along the highway to Montello, Nevada (Route 233). This fence will be approximately two and one-half miles long. The proposed fence that will separate the South Seeding use area from the native range to the north will be constructed in such a way as to allow the cattle using either field to water at the reservoir at the bottom of the Lower Squaw Creek Field.

(14). Expand the seeding within the southern portion of this pasture. Up to 1,200 acres of new seeding is proposed. The seed mix will include desirable forage grasses and forage kochia.

The final grazing plan calls for the South Seeding portion of this pasture to be grazed as described under the interim grazing plan. The South Seeding use area will commonly be grazed in the spring prior to the cattle being moved into the North Pequop Mountain Pasture, and grazed again in the late summer/fall as the cattle come off the summer range. Use during late summer/fall depends on the level of use made in the spring and the degree of regrowth available for later use. This pasture will be periodically deferred to allow a recovery period following dry years when there is little regrowth. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Office to plan when this area will be grazed.*

The North Native portion of this pasture north of the proposed fence will be grazed under a deferred rotation schedule with two years of use during the critical growing season and two years of deferred use.

North Pequop Mountain Pasture - The final grazing plan will result in a fenced pasture south of the East Squaw Creek channel, a pasture north of East Squaw Creek, and a riparian pasture enclosing the main channel of East Squaw Creek. A deferred rotation grazing system will be implemented using the two large pastures. The Upper Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture will be managed as a separate field which is described below.

Additional riparian management fences/exclosures around some of the springs are also proposed along with some new water developments. The riparian fences will be designed to minimize fence maintenance resulting from the movement of elk through the area. When proper functioning condition has been achieved within any of the proposed riparian exclosures, livestock grazing may be periodically authorized if the authorized officer determines it is desirable to remove old growth and/or enhance wildlife use such as sage grouse brood rearing.

New projects proposed for this pasture include the following:

(15). Construct a boundary fence between the East and West Big Springs Allotments within the



North Pequop Mountain Pasture. The fence will be approximately three miles long and run along the boundary line from Interstate 80 at Pequop Summit to Rocky Point, with a short gap fence in the canyon immediately north of Rocky Point. This fence will be designed as a let-down fence to be let-down by 9/30 and put back up prior to the entry of livestock the following year. This fence will also be part of an interior pasture fence proposed for the east side of this pasture as described under the grazing management practices for the East Big Springs Allotment below. The livestock permittees will be responsible for letting the fence down and putting it back up in a timely manner.

(16). Construct a pasture fence that will connect with the fence described above at a location just north of the middle fork of East Squaw Creek and run easterly to the Squaw Creek Ranch Field. This fence will be approximately three miles long. This fence will be designed as a let-down fence to be let-down by 9/30 and put back up prior to the entry of livestock the following year. The livestock permittee on the east side will be responsible for letting the fence down and putting it back up in a timely manner. The lower one and one-half miles of fence will create the border for the north side of the Upper Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture.

(17). Construct approximately two miles of drift fence that will run north from the Pequop Exit on Interstate 80 toward the southwest corner of the Squaw Creek Ranch Field.

(18). Construct the following riparian management fences/exclosures:

(a). Enclose the main channel of East Squaw Creek with a fence on the south and west sides to create a riparian pasture in conjunction with the proposed fence on the north side described above. This fence will enclose the main spring complex near the middle of section 8, T. 37 N., R. 66 E. and the main channel eastward to the Squaw Creek Ranch Field fence. To provide water outside the riparian pasture, water will be piped from one of the main channel springs at the upper end of the riparian pasture to a location north of the riparian pasture fence. A water gap where animals could water directly from East Squaw Creek will also be considered at the lower end of the riparian pasture.

(b). Fence the spring and channel leading to the reservoir at Lower Beacon Spring located in the northeast corner of section 17, T. 37 N., R. 66 E. A portion of the area just above the reservoir will be left open as a loafing area for cattle.

(c). Fence the spring at East (Upper) Beacon Spring located in the southwest corner of section 17, T. 37 N., R. 66 E. and pipe water to a trough outside the fence and to a location approximately one mile east/southeast of the spring.

(d). Fence Wally Spring including the aspen stand nearby and install a rock gabion or apron where the spring flows over the lip of the cut bank.

(e). Fence the three spring complex at the head of the middle fork of East Squaw Creek located in the NESW section 7, T. 37 N., R. 66 E.

(f). Fence the spring on the north fork of East Squaw Creek located in the northeast corner of section 7, T. 37 N., R. 66 E.

(g). Eliminate and/or control noxious and invasive plants and reseed as necessary.

(h). There are also a couple spring developments that capture all the water from the source and

pipe it to a trough. Therefore, the water development designs of these spring developments on public lands will be evaluated to determine if the spring developments warrant modification to encourage the growth of riparian vegetation.

(19). Extend a pipeline from the proposed well at the north end of the pasture to a location east of the rangeline between the East and West Big Springs Allotments. The proposed well will be located one to two miles east of Pequop Spring as described under the final grazing plan for the West Big Springs Allotment. Each permittee will be responsible for monitoring the drift of their cattle across the unfenced boundary line and moving their cattle back to their authorized use area in a timely manner.

The Nevada Division of Wildlife and the interested public will be consulted prior to the approval of the above proposed projects. Required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation will be completed prior to development of the proposed projects on public lands.

Upper Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture - When this pasture is fenced as described above, it will be rested from livestock grazing until it has achieved proper functioning condition. Once it has reached proper functioning condition, grazing management will be directed at maintaining proper functioning condition and achieving additional riparian habitat objectives. When initial grazing use is authorized in this pasture, monitoring of the utilization on streambank herbaceous riparian plants and willows/aspen will be used to determine if further adjustments will be made in order to achieve proper functioning condition and habitat objectives. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office to plan when this area will be grazed.* When initial use is authorized in this pasture, the following stubble height/utilization limits will apply:

- Stubble Height of Herbaceous Riparian Species: A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.
- Willow Utilization: Do not exceed thirty-five (35%) average utilization of the total current year's leader growth on the portion of the willow within five (5) feet of ground level by the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.
- Aspen Utilization: Do not use more than 30% of available aspen stems by the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.

Proposed projects within this pasture are listed below:

As mentioned under proposed projects for the N. Pequop Mountain Pasture above, a pipeline is proposed to bring water outside the riparian pasture fence into the North Squaw Creek/Baker Spring Pasture. Water will be piped from one of the springs at the upper end of the riparian pasture.

A water gap at the lower end of the riparian pasture fence will be considered in the design of the

fence to provide water for use in the North Squaw Creek and/or South Squaw Creek Pastures.

Eliminate and/or control noxious and invasive plants. Treatments are envisioned to include the use of herbicides and/or digging on existing populations in conjunction with reseeding treated areas and other patches of bare ground that are likely to be invaded by weeds once the riparian pasture fence is in place.

Squaw Creek Ranch Field - This field will be managed as a riparian pasture as described under the interim grazing plan with use limited to no more than three weeks. Monitoring of the utilization on streambank herbaceous riparian plants and willows will be used to determine if further adjustments will be made in order to achieve proper functioning condition and habitat objectives. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office to plan when this area will be grazed.* Management will be directed at achieving riparian habitat objectives including proper functioning condition. Annual stubble height/utilization limits on herbaceous riparian vegetation and willows will be used to tailor the period of use. These annual stubble height/utilization limits are described as follows:

- Stubble Height of Herbaceous Riparian Species: A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.

- Willow Utilization: Do not exceed thirty-five (35%) average utilization of the total current year's leader growth on the portion of the willow within five (5) feet of ground level by the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.

(20). Consider relocating fences to create a riparian pasture fence of a width similar to the Upper Riparian Pasture.

Lower Squaw Creek Ranch Field - This field has been irrigated to grow meadow grasses for livestock use in the late summer/fall and will continue to be managed as described under the interim grazing plan. This field will continue to be irrigated by the permittee and grazed up to three weeks between 8/01 and 10/31. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office to plan when this area will be grazed.*

Windmill Seeding Field - The preponderance of forage in this pasture is provided by two seeded species, Russian wildrye and crested wheatgrass. This pasture will commonly be grazed in the spring/summer but periodically deferred to allow a recovery period following dry years when there is little regrowth. *Each year, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office to plan when this area will be grazed.*

Railroad Field - Deferred rotation grazing will be implemented on this pasture. There will be two consecutive years of use beginning 07/01 or later followed by two years of use beginning 05/01 or later. Actual use will not be expected to span the entire period of use displayed in the table above. *Each year, the permittee will include the actual planned period of use in the*

*application for grazing use.*

Collar and Elbow Pasture - This pasture will be managed as described under the interim system. Use will begin on 08/15 or later and end by 01/31. The actual period of use during this time will tend to be variable. For example, during those years when water and/or forage runs short in the North Pequop Mountain Pasture, the cattle may be moved into this pasture beginning in August. When water and/or forage is adequate elsewhere, the cattle may not enter this pasture until late September or October. The cattle may remain in this pasture until November and moved to the Shafter Pasture or stay into the late fall/winter until snows require removal.

North of Home Pasture - Use in this pasture is generally trailing cattle to and from other pastures; however, some cattle may periodically be held in this pasture for a longer period of time. *Because of the variability in the use of this pasture, the permittee will meet with the Elko Field Office each year to plan when this area will be grazed.* If this pasture is grazed annually during the critical growth period of the key forage species (5/1 - 6/30), utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 40%. If this pasture is deferred at least two out of four years until 7/1, utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 50%. Planned use will be directed toward maintaining healthy forage plants, and a stable watershed for the Source Water Area Protection Zone associated with the watershed that supplies water to West Wendover, Nevada.

**Rationale:** Deferred rotation grazing is intended to help the forage plants remain healthy, provide seed to populate the plant communities for watershed stability and long-term sustainable use for livestock, wildlife and other multiple uses. Periods of livestock use between pastures generally overlap to provide flexibility in movement dates needed to deal with weather variations and other unpredictable events, and move livestock to pastures/use areas within pastures when most compatible with achieving good distribution.

The periods of use in some pastures or use areas within some pastures will be determined on an annual basis. This allows management to consider factors affecting the pasture/use area the previous year(s), project current years production and water availability, and direct use to best achieve multiple use objectives and standards for rangeland health. Annual use on seedings at utilization levels not to exceed objectives is expected to maintain the health of forage grasses, with periodic deferment following drought when observations of grass vigor indicates a need to defer use until the critical growing season is finished.

Riparian habitats will improve as a result of proposed fencing, stubble height/utilization limits and deferred rotation grazing practices. Managing for proper functioning condition riparian habitat and other habitat values will improve watershed stability and provide more desirable habitat for wildlife including habitat for sage grouse brood rearing.

The proposed boundary fence that will separate the East Big Springs Allotment from the West Big Springs Allotment in the North Pequop Mountain Pasture will prevent the drift of cattle between the two allotments and also serve as part of the pasture management fences proposed for the east side. The fence will be designed as a let-down fence to be let down before the opening



of the rifle hunting season on mule deer. Dropping down the fence wires is necessary to allow deer free movement through the area during the hunting season as well as reduce the need for some fence repairs from elk passing through the area.

The proposed water developments will either replace water sources fenced to manage riparian areas or provide new water sources that will expand grazing use and offer more use areas with which to implement deferred rotation strategies. In addition, by not operating the proposed water development east of Pequop Spring before July 1, new grass growth each year will be available as hiding cover for sage grouse nesting and brood rearing activities.

The proposed seedings will increase forage production and diversity for livestock and wildlife, particularly antelope. Forage diversity was generally identified as a limiting habitat attribute for antelope and the addition of forage kochia and forbs to the seed mix will improve forage diversity. The increased livestock forage production from the new seedings will provide a forage reserve during dry cycles that will improve consistency in livestock stocking rates and management over the long-term.

#### **4. Terms and Conditions for Livestock Grazing Use**

- (1). Authorized grazing use will be in accordance with the Big Springs Allotment Final Multiple Use Decision dated \_\_\_\_\_.
- (2). The terms and conditions of your grazing permit may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.
- (3). Supplemental feeding is limited to salt, mineral, and/or protein supplements in block, granular or liquid form. Such supplements will be placed at least 1/4 mile from live waters (springs, streams and troughs), wet or dry meadows, and aspen stands.
- (4). An actual use report showing use by pasture, and by use area, will be turned in within 15 days after completing annual use.
- (5). All riparian enclosures, including spring development enclosures, are closed to livestock use unless specifically authorized in writing by the authorized officer.
- (6). The numbers of livestock to be grazed will remain flexible according to the needs of the permittee. The grazing plan is based on the number of AUMs that may be removed from each pasture. Livestock numbers and periods of use will be applied for on an annual basis. Deviations beyond the flexibility described above may be allowed to meet the needs of the resources and the permittee as long as these deviations are consistent with multiple use objectives. Deviations beyond the limits of flexibility outlined above, including deviations in the turnout date, increases in livestock numbers and deviations from the grazing plan, will require an application, and written authorization from the authorized officer.

(7). Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (g), the holder of this authorization must notify the authorized officer, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), you must stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the discovery and protect it from your activities for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

**Rationale:** The above are standard terms and conditions for grazing use.

**5. Construct the following range improvement projects within the West and East Big Springs Allotments:**

| <b>Proposed Range Improvements for the West Big Springs Allotment</b> |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Project</b>  | <b>Units</b> |
| Independence Valley Well  | 1            |
| Independence Valley Seeding   | 4,000 acres  |
| Holborn Seeding   | 1,000 acres  |
| East and West Big Springs Boundary Fence                              | 3 miles      |
| North Pequop Mountain Well  | 1            |
| Pequop Mountain Bench Well  | 1            |
| Pequop Well Storage Tank  | 1            |
| Spring Developments/Exclosures (as prioritized)                       | n/a          |

**Rationale:** The spring exclosures are intended to protect riparian areas while providing water outside for livestock and wildlife. The wells are intended to provide water for livestock and wildlife in areas where there is no perennial water. The proposed seedings will allow for some livestock use in areas currently dominated by valley big sagebrush and rabbitbrush with little herbaceous understory. Completion of these projects will help achieve multiple use objectives and standards for rangeland health in the West Big Springs Allotment.

Required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation will be completed prior to authorization of the proposed projects.

| Proposed Range Improvements for the East Big Springs Allotment |               |
|--|---------------|
| Project  | Units         |
| Long Canyon Drift Fence  | ¼ miles       |
| Burnt Well Storage Tank  | 8,000 gallons |
| Oasis Seeding  | 3,000 acres   |
| South Well Storage Tank (8,000 gallons)                        | 1             |
| South Well Reservoir   | 1             |
| Lower Hardy Creek Well   | 1             |
| West Wendover Pipeline Seeding                                 | 4,000 acres   |
| West Wendover Seeding Fence                                    | 7 miles       |
| West Wendover Pipeline Extensions                              | 4             |
| Six Mile Canyon Drift Fence                                    | ¼ miles       |
| Enlarge Upper Six Mile Canyon Reservoir                        | 1             |
| Lower Nanny Creek Exclosure                                    | ¼ miles       |
| Upper Nanny Creek Exclosure                                    | ¼ miles       |
| Adele Spring Exclosure   | ¼ miles       |
| Milk House Spring Exclosure                                    | ¼ miles       |
| East and West Big Springs Boundary Fence                       | 3 miles       |
| Lower Squaw Creek Drift Fence (East Squaw Creek Pasture)       | 2 ½ miles     |
| East Squaw Creek Pasture Seeding                               | 1,200 acres   |
| North Squaw Creek Pasture Pipeline Extension                   | 3 miles       |
| East Squaw Creek Pasture Fence                                 | 3 miles       |
| Upper East Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture Fence                  | 1 ½ miles     |
| Pequop Exit Drift Fence  | 2 miles       |
| Middle Fork East Squaw Creek Exclosure                         | ½ miles       |



|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Lower Beacon Spring Exclosure                 | ¼ mile  |
| Upper Beacon Spring Exclosure                 | ¼ mile  |
| Upper Beacon Spring Pipeline                  | 1 mile  |
| Wally Spring Exclosure                        | ¼ mile  |
| North Fork East Squaw Creek Exclosure         | 1 mile  |
| North Pequop Mountain Well Pipeline Extension | 2 miles |
| Noxious Weed Treatments                       | N/A     |
| Other Spring Exclosures/Developements         | N/A     |

**Rationale:** The spring exclosures are intended to protect riparian areas while providing water outside for livestock, wildlife, and other multiple uses. The wells are intended to provide water for livestock and wildlife in areas where there is no perennial water. The proposed seedings will allow for some livestock use during the critical growing season. Deferment of the native upland in the East Big Springs Allotment annually will maintain or improve the ecological status and vigor of native upland forage species. Completion of these projects will help achieve multiple use objectives and standards for rangeland health in the East Big Springs Allotment.

Required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation will be completed prior to authorization of the proposed projects.

**6. Continue to conduct necessary monitoring studies and periodically evaluate the effects of grazing to determine if progress is being made in meeting the multiple use objectives and standards for rangeland health. The Big Springs Allotment(s) will be re-evaluated in accordance with priorities established in the Elko Field Office Monitoring and Evaluation Schedule.**

**a. Establish new key areas or supplement studies in the following locations:**

Independence Valley Pasture - Utilization studies within each principal use area, and condition and trend transects in ecological sites that represent the principal use areas.

Holborn Pasture - Utilization and condition and trend studies at one or two new key areas that will replace existing key areas 03, 04 & 06. The new key area(s) are to be established in range sites with Thurber needlegrass and/or bluebunch wheatgrass which are highly preferred forage species. One suggested location is in section 34 or 35, T. 38 N., R. 64 E. south of the Holborn private pasture from which water flows from a spring with flows extending southward during spring snowmelt/rains. A second suggested location is south or west of Independence Well in section 13, T. 38 N., R. 64 E. One or both of the key species noted above are common in these

areas and are commonly grazed by livestock.

Upper East Squaw Creek (Proposed Riparian Pasture) - Riparian stubble height/utilization transects and trend photos.

Squaw Creek Ranch Field - Riparian stubble height/utilization transects and trend photos.

Lower Squaw Creek Ranch Field - Utilization studies.

Railroad Field - Utilization and condition and trend studies.

Windmill Seeding - Utilization and trend studies.

East Squaw Creek Pasture - Utilization and trend studies on the seeding at the south end.

Collar and Elbow Pasture - Utilization studies within each principal use area, and condition and trend transects in ecological sites that represent the principal use areas.

Shafter Pasture - Condition and trend studies at key area 4306-21 (Shafter Well #2).

East Pequop Bench Pasture - Utilization studies within each principal use area, and condition and trend transects in ecological sites that represent the principal use areas.

Six-Mile Canyon Pasture - Utilization studies and condition and trend transects in ecological sites that represent the principal use areas.

Riparian Enclosures - Trend photos.

New Seedings - Utilization and trend studies.

**Rationale:** Additional monitoring information is needed to clarify grazing capacities, appropriate periods of use, and progress towards objectives.

**b. Studies will be conducted in accordance with BLM policy manual guidance as outlined in the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook and other technical references and will include, but are not limited, to the following:**

**Uplands:**

Forage production

Ecological condition

Frequency trend

Utilization

Actual use

Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (BLM TR 1734-6)

Ecological Site Inventory  
Cover

**Riparian:**

Proper Function Condition Assessments (BLM TR 1737-16, 1999)

Utilization/Stubble height

**Wildlife Habitat:**

Habitat condition studies, Cole browse, utilization, condition studies, (BLM Manual 6630)

Wildlife population census/updated maps (NDOW)

**Wild Horses:**

Wild horse population census

Wild horse utilization data

**Rationale:** Additional monitoring and analysis will be required to determine whether objectives are being met and determine any necessary changes in grazing management.

Authority for the actions contained in this final decision is found in 43 CFR 4100.0-8, 4110.2-2, 4110.3, 4110.3-1, 4110.3-2, 4110.3-3, 4120.2 (c), (d), and (e), 4120.3-1, 4130.2 (b), (d), (e), and (f), 4130.3, 4130.3-1, 4130.3-2, 4130.3-3, 4160.3, 4160.4, 4180.1, and 4180.2.

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other person whose interest is adversely affected by this final decision may file an appeal and petition for stay of the decision pending final determination on appeal. The appeal and petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, at 3900 E. Idaho Street, Elko, NV, 89801 within 30 days following receipt of the final decision.

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error.

Should you wish to file a motion for stay, the appellant shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

## II. OTHER MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

**1. Treat noxious and invasive weeds in a manner that is most appropriate to the weed species and degree of infestation. Treatment will be in accordance with the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States, the Programmatic Environmental Assessment of Integrated Weed Management on Bureau of Land Management Lands, and the Elko Field Office site specific Invasive-nonnative Vegetation Treatment environmental assessment.**

**Rationale:** The BLM is mandated to manage vegetation on public lands. The BLM must control noxious weeds and undesirable plants to maintain or improve the quality of forests and rangelands for multiple resources.

**2. Administer all grazing and any projects within the Bluebell Wilderness Study Area in full compliance with the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review.**

**Rationale:** The BLM is mandated by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to manage Wilderness Study Areas so as not to impair the suitability of each area for preservation of wilderness. This is generally referred to as the "non-impairment criteria".

**3. Drinking Water Source Protection Plan for the City of West Wendover, Nevada. The BLM agrees not to locate or allow the location of any Potential Contamination Sources (PCS), as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, in Protection Zones (PZ) 1,2,3, and 4, so far as this is consistent with the authority granted to BLM to regulate public land activities.**

**Rationale:** Managing activities that could adversely affect the quality of drinking water is important for public health.

## III. WILDLIFE DECISION

**1. Modify the wire spacing on the West Pequop Bench Fence (#5608) to meet current BLM specifications. On three wire fences, the wire spacing will be 18"-8"-12" from the ground up, and the bottom wire will be smooth. On four wire fences, the wire spacing will be 16"-6"-8"-12" from the ground up, and the bottom wire will be smooth.**

**2. Inventory the remaining fences on public lands and modify those fences to BLM specifications as needed to facilitate the movement of big game.**

**3. Modify existing fences and design new fences to facilitate the movement of deer, antelope and elk, and reduce maintenance costs.**

**4. Improve forage diversity for antelope through the seeding of grass, shrub/half-shrub and forb seeds. The areas to be seeded will be associated with the water developments in the**



**Independence Valley and Holborn Pastures of the West Big Springs Allotment, and the East Pequop Bench and East Squaw Creek Pastures of the East Big Springs Allotment as described under the Livestock Grazing Management section above.**

**5. Install additional big game guzzlers to provide more water locations and to attract big game to areas little used by livestock. The specific locations for new water guzzlers will be identified at a later date.**

**6. Manage sage grouse habitat (i.e. leks/strutting grounds, nesting, brooding, and summer and winter habitats) consistent with the Western States Sage Grouse Guidelines, as adapted for use in Nevada.**

**Rationale:** Designing new fences and modifying existing fences to facilitate big game movements improves access to their habitat and reduces fence maintenance.

Insufficient forage diversity for antelope was cited as a limitation for antelope habitat in this allotment. The proposed seedings are intended to provide areas of increased forage diversity for antelope as well as other wildlife.

Installing additional big game guzzlers expands big game distribution and provides water for other wildlife.

Maintaining and improving sage grouse habitat will assist in maintaining or increasing populations.

Authority for the actions contained in this final decision is found in 43 CFR Part 24.4 (c) and (i).

Within 30 days of receipt of this wildlife decision, you have the right to appeal to the Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 4.4. If an appeal is taken, you must follow the procedures outlined in the enclosed Form NV 1840-2, "Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals". Please also provide this office with a copy of your Statement of Reasons. An appeal should be in writing and specify the reasons, clearly and concisely, as to why you think the decision is in error.

In addition, within 30 days of receipt of this decision you have a right to file a petition for a stay (suspension) of the decision together with your appeal in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.21. The petition must be served upon the same parties identified in items 2, 3, and 4 of the enclosed form titled "Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals". The appellant has the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

#### IV. WILD HORSE DECISION

**1. Establish an Appropriate Management Level (AML) range for wild horses of 34 to 56 wild horses for 12 months (408 to 672 AUMs) within that portion of the Goshute Herd Management Area in the Shafter Pasture of the Big Springs Allotment.**

| Summary of Changes to Wild Horse Management Levels |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Pasture  | Pre-Evaluation Initial Management Level (AUMs/Animal Numbers) | Post-Evaluation AML (AUMs/Animal Numbers) |
| Shafter  | 768 AUMs = 64 Horses for 12 Months                            | 408-672 AUMs = 34-56 Horses for 12 Months |

**Rationale:** In accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4700, it has been determined through the evaluation of monitoring data that a thriving natural ecological balance will be obtained by providing wild horses 672 AUM's annually from the Shafter Pasture of the Big Springs Allotment. This decision will result in maintaining the present population so as to not exceed 56 wild horses. They will be managed within a range of 34-56 wild horses (408-672 AUM's).

The Wells Resource Management Plan (RMP) Wild Horse Amendment established a utilization objective of ten percent (10%) on key forage species for wild horse use prior to entry by livestock on winter range so as not to exceed the utilization objective of 55% on key forage species by the end of the combined wild horse and cattle winter use period. Evaluation of use by wild horses has concluded that wild horse use prior to the entry of livestock on the winter range in the Shafter Pasture is the most limiting factor. The principal concern with wild horse use is their use of key forage grasses during the growing season. Limiting wild horse use to an average of 10% use prior to entry by livestock is considered to be a prudent stocking level to protect the health of key forage plants exposed to grazing during the critical growing season every year. Most of the wild horse use prior to entry by livestock has occurred during the growing season.

Monitoring information collected at key area 4306-21 and vicinity is most representative of pre-livestock use by wild horses; therefore the data collected in this area was used to establish the AML. The calculated capacity for wild horse use, based on pre-livestock utilization and actual use, is 389 AUMs for seven (7) months of use. Since the Shafter Pasture is considered to be a year-long wild horse use area, extrapolation of horse use for a full 12 month period results in a calculated AML of 672 AUMs (56 wild horses).

Maintaining wild horses within the appropriate management level (AML) will result in a thriving, natural, and ecological balance between wild horses and other resource values.

Continued monitoring within the allotment will show if any adjustments to AML are needed. The establishment of AML as a range is in conformance with BLM's 2001 Wild Horse Strategy where all HMA's will be gathered over a four (4) year cycle plan to manage horses Bureau wide. The strategy is to implement the management ranges identified in this and all FMUD's involving wild horse management, which is to remove wild horses to 40% below AML, then manage at a range where the AML is the maximum number for the HMA.

**2. Prepare a Population Management Plan to guide the management of wild horses within the Goshute Herd Area to ensure that wild horse populations maintain their free-roaming, self-sustaining, genetically viable status.**

**Rationale:** Population management strategies are necessary to ensure that wild horse populations maintain their free-roaming, self-sustaining, genetically viable status. All Population Management Plans will be prepared in accordance with Bureau regulations, policies, and National Program Office Guidance.

**3. As budget and scheduling allows remove sufficient numbers of wild horses associated with the Goshute Herd Management Area to attain the appropriate management level (AML) and maintain wild horse populations at a level which will maintain a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other resource values.**

**Rationale:** See rationale for establishing the AML above.

**4. Continue to remove all wild horses that occupy areas managed as horse free areas.**

**Rationale:** Census flights have shown that wild horses have occupied areas within the Big Springs Allotment that are designated as horse free areas. In particular, wild horses have been seen occupying areas within the Independence Valley Pasture designated as horse free. These horses will be removed to comply with the Wells RMP Wild Horse Amendment. If the wild horses are not restricted to the HMA's, their use could disrupt the planned deferred rotation system by reducing the forage planned for livestock use.

**5. Inventory, identify, and eliminate existing wire hazards. Clean up and dispose of old wire, especially where it creates a significant hazard to wild horses.**

**Rationale:** Wild horses have become tangled in old barbed wire especially in old spring exclosures and wild horse traps. Entanglement in barbed wire causes extensive injuries and in some cases the need for the animal to be destroyed.

**6. Continue to collect pre-livestock use by wild horses and combined use (cattle and horses) utilization data.**

**Rationale:** Collection of utilization data is necessary to determine if management practices are meeting objectives and will indicate management changes needed in response to climatological changes, such as drought, etc.

**7. Continue to collect seasonal distribution and census data on the Goshute HMA.  
Continue to collect seasonal distribution and census data on horse populations that are occupying areas managed as horse free.**

**Rationale:** In 1991, intensive seasonal distribution flights were begun within the Elko District. These census flights have provided valuable information on horse movements and will continue until monitoring data indicates that the appropriate management level has been attained in all HMAs, and regularly thereafter.

**8. Do not construct the fence described in the Wells RMP Wild Horse Amendment that was intended to prevent wild horses from drifting north into the checkerboard land pattern of the Goshute Herd Management Area.**

**Rationale:** The movement of wild horses into the checkerboard area is expected to be minimal when the numbers of wild horses are managed at the AML. The need to construct this fence will again be considered if substantial numbers of wild horses occupy the checkerboard area.

Authority for the actions described in this final decision regarding wild horses is found in Section 3(a) and (b) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, as amended, and 43 CFR Parts 4700.0-6(a) and (d), 4710.1, 4710.3.1, 4770.3(a) 4710.4, and 4720.1.

Within 30 days of receipt of this wild horse decision, you have the right to appeal to the Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 4.4. If an appeal is taken, you must follow the procedures outlined in the enclosed Form NV 1840-2, "Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals". Please also provide this office with a copy of your Statement of Reasons. An appeal should be in writing and specify the reasons, clearly and concisely, as to why you think the decision is in error.

In addition, within 30 days or receipt of this decision you have a right to file a petition for a stay (suspension) of the decision together with your appeal in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.21. The petition must be served upon the same parties identified in items 2, 3, and 4 of the enclosed form titled "Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals". The appellants have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.



## V. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

An Environmental Assessment (EA) (BLM/EK/PL-2002/029) has been prepared to analyze the impacts of the management changes outlined above. All range improvements projects will be subject to additional environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act prior to any construction activities. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the above referenced EA, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This Final Multiple Use Decision serves as the Decision Record for EA #BLM/EK/PL-2002/029.

Sincerely,



CLINTON R. OKE,  
Assistant Field Manager  
Renewable Resources

enclosures: Appendix 1 - Upland/Desired Plant Community (DPC)/Wild Horse/Riparian Objectives

Appendix 2 - Maps Big Spring Allotment

Response to Protest Points

Form NV 1840-2 "Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals"

cc: Vidler Water Co.  
Newmont Gold Company  
Nevada Division of Wildlife, Region II  
Nevada State Clearinghouse Dept. Of Administration  
Nevada Cattleman's Association  
Nevada Land and Resource Company  
Nevada State Division of Agriculture  
Elko Board of County Commissioners  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Resource Concepts, Inc.  
Toiyabe Chapter Sierra Club  
Friends of Nevada Wilderness  
Charles and John Young  
Marti P. Hoots  
HTT Resource Advisors  
Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses  
Wild Horse Organized Assistance  
Fund for Animals, Rocky Mountain Coordinator  
Fund for Animals  
Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition  
Western Watersheds Project  
Committee for Idaho's High Desert  
Mike Volberg

**Appendix 1**  
**Standards for Rangeland Health and Multiple Use Objectives**  
**Big Springs Allotment**

**BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT**  
**Standards for Rangeland Health and Multiple Use Objectives**

Changes to the allotment specific objectives as a result of the Big Springs Allotment Evaluation process are described below followed by the listing of objectives to be carried forward for the next allotment evaluation. The standards for rangeland health and resource management plan (RMP) objectives, as amended, remain unchanged.

**Allotment Specific Objectives**

**a. Delete the portion of the objective related to improving livestock distribution in the Holborn Pasture in the West Big Springs Allotment and add to the objective to improve distribution within the East Pequop Bench Pasture and Six-Mile Canyon Pasture in the East Big Springs Allotment. The objective to improve the distribution in certain other pastures remains unchanged.**

**Rationale:** Current livestock distribution patterns are considered acceptable in the Holborn Pasture given the availability of existing stockwaters, and there are no management actions proposed to change the current patterns. Improving livestock distribution in the East Pequop Bench and Six-Mile Canyon Pastures is needed, and projects are planned to improve distribution.

**b. Delete the general objectives regarding the improvement or maintenance of ecological status in certain pastures.**

**Rationale:** These objectives are not measurable as stated. The specific key area objectives to be carried forward are stated in measurable terms and it is therefore unnecessary to carry forward the less specific objectives.

**c. Delete the objective to construct the fence described in the Wells RMP Wild Horse Amendment that was intended to prevent wild horses from drifting north into the checkerboard land pattern of the Goshute Herd Management Area.**

**Rationale:** The movement of wild horses into the checkerboard area of the Goshute Mountains is expected to be minimal when the numbers of wild horses are managed at the AML. The need to construct this fence will again be considered if substantial numbers of wild horses occupy the checkerboard area.



## **Upland Key Area Objectives**

### **d. Key Area 4306-01 (Independence Valley) -**

**Revise the ecological condition objective to read “maintain or improve the ecological condition rating of this Shallow Calcareous Loam 8-10" site at or above 48% of the potential natural community”.**

**Revise the frequency trend objective to read “maintain or increase the percent frequency of Indian ricegrass and the needlegrass species”.**

**Rationale:** This ecological site is normally dominated by black sagebrush, Indian ricegrass and needle and thread grass, with white sage being a small component. However, the percent composition of white sage at this key area is at least twice as high as the percent allowable in the range site description; therefore, increasing white sage will not improve the condition rating. To increase the ecological condition rating significantly, Indian ricegrass will need to increase. The percent composition for Indian ricegrass that is allowable in the condition rating is 35%; however, it currently represents only 2% of the composition by weight, whereas both black sagebrush and rabbitbrush exceed the maximum allowable composition. Since there is a relatively low composition of Indian ricegrass currently, it is not expected to increase significantly over the next 10 - 20 years due to the paucity of seed produced by the small population of Indian ricegrass plants and the difficulty of overcoming the competition from shrubs in the existing community. Therefore, the intention of the objective stated above is to portray that the plant community will not change significantly over the next 10-20 years while also allowing for the possibility of some improvement if the weather cycles favor an increase in the key forage grasses, particularly Indian ricegrass. Any analysis will need to take into account the effects of precipitation when making comparisons between years.

### **e. Key Area 4306-02 (Independence Valley) -**

**Delete the condition and trend objectives, but retain the utilization objective for Great basin wildrye.**

**Rationale:** This community has been disturbed in the past and now support only rubber rabbitbrush along with a small amount of wildrye. This community won't change significantly as long as the rabbitbrush continues to dominate. The wildrye was grazed only slightly during the evaluation period and is expected to remain a small component as long as use conforms to the utilization objective; therefore, only utilization will continue to be monitored at this site.

**f. Key Areas 4306-03 & 04 & 06 (Holborn Pasture)**

**Delete the condition and trend objectives for these key areas and monitor utilization during use pattern mapping. Retain these records for future reference. Develop condition and trend objectives for the proposed new key areas following the collection of baseline data. The utilization objective for the native key forage species will continue to be 50% average use; not to exceed 55% in any single year.**

**Rationale:** The establishment of new key areas will better represent the highly preferred forage grasses in areas that are preferred sites for livestock grazing in this pasture. The existing key areas have not shown to receive consistent use by livestock and/or the studies didn't capture the highly preferred key forage species. Development of key area objectives at the new key areas is best accomplished after the baseline information has been collected.

**g. Key Area 4306-05 (N. Pequop Mountain Pasture) -**

**Revise the frequency trend objective to read "maintain or increase the frequency of Thurber needlegrass".**

**Rationale:** The previous trend objective called for significant increases in bluebunch wheatgrass, Thurber needlegrass and western wheatgrass. Bluebunch wheatgrass is only a small component at this key area and is not expected to increase significantly due to a paucity of seed from the few plants in the community. However, the frequency data collected in 2000 showed significant increases in both Thurber needlegrass and western wheatgrass which are the two common grasses on this site. Thurber needlegrass is the most abundant grass on this site and the most highly preferred forage plant. Thurber needlegrass is also a bunchgrass whereas western wheatgrass is a grass that spreads by underground rhizomes. Grasses that can spread through underground rhizomes can increase dramatically during above average moisture years and likewise shrink back dramatically during drought years. Well established Thurber needlegrass plants are less subject to large swings in frequency and therefore more amenable to analysis of trends. Revising the objective to allow for the maintenance or increase of Thurber needlegrass frequency recognizes that the frequency is high and there may not be room for additional significant increases, but doesn't preclude that possibility.

**h. Key Area 4306-19 (East Pequop Bench - North Bench Pasture)**

**Revise this objective following completion of the fire rehabilitation.**

**Rationale:** This key area was burned twice in the 1990s. The most recent fire rehabilitation actions resulted in the seeding of this area; therefore it is necessary to develop revised objectives after we see the results of the fire rehabilitation.

Note: When additional monitoring data is collected at established key areas, particularly those key areas where data has not been recently collected, the BLM will review the data and determine if the objective to improve or maintain ecological conditions continues to be appropriate and will be modified as necessary.

### **Specific Riparian and Wetland Site Objectives**

**i. Add specific objectives for riparian and wetland sites - Please refer to the tables below for the description of desired condition objectives for riparian and wetland sites including the timeframes associated with achieving significant progress towards proper functioning condition (PFC).**

**Rationale:** Management of riparian and wetland sites to achieve proper functioning condition (PFC) is in conformance with the standards for rangeland health. The desired condition objective for several riparian areas includes management for woody riparian plants such as aspen and willow, where they are present, that are also tied to the achievement of wildlife habitat and other multiple use objectives.

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The following is the listing of objectives to be carried forward for the next allotment evaluation; however, additional objectives are expected to be established following the data collections at new key areas as well as revision of existing key area objectives as more recent data is collected and analyzed.

#### **A. STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR RANGELAND HEALTH**

**Standard 1. Upland Sites:** Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and land form.

**Standard 2. Riparian and Wetland Sites:** Riparian and wetland areas exhibit a properly functioning condition and achieve state water quality criteria.

**Standard 3. Habitat:** Habitats exhibit a healthy, productive, and diverse population of native and/or desirable plant species, appropriate to the site characteristics, to provide suitable feed, water, cover and living space for animal species and maintain ecological processes. Habitat conditions meet life cycle requirements of threatened and endangered species.

**Standard 4. Cultural Resources:** Land use plans will recognize cultural resources within the context of multiple use.

**B. WELL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES, AS AMENDED:**

**1. Livestock Grazing**

- a. Public rangelands are managed to: enhance the productivity of the rangelands by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration; stabilize the livestock industry dependent on public range; provide for inventory and categorization based on conditions and trends; and provide for orderly use, improvement and development.
- b. To provide for livestock grazing consistent with other resource uses...

Attainment or non-attainment of the general objectives above are based on the conclusions for the more specific Allotment/Rangeland Program Summary and Key Area Objectives listed below.

**2. Wild Horses (As Applicable to the Big Springs Allotment)**

- a. Manage wild horses outside of checkerboard areas where land ownership patterns are not a problem for management.
- b. Manage wild horses within HMAs and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other resource needs.

Specific objectives for wild horse management in the Big Springs Allotment have been developed based on the objectives above. These objectives are included under the Allotment Specific Objectives below.

**3. Terrestrial Wildlife habitat**

- a. Conserve and enhance wildlife habitat to the maximum extent possible.
- b. Eliminate all of the fencing hazards in crucial big game habitat and most of the fencing hazards in noncrucial big game habitat.
- c. Eliminate all of the high and medium priority terrestrial riparian habitat conflicts in coordination with other resource uses.

Attainment or non-attainment of the general objectives above are based on the conclusions under the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health, and Allotment Specific Objectives below.

- d. Manage public lands in the Wells Resource Area on a sustained yield basis to support elk populations at a level consistent with other resource needs, while minimizing impacts to adjacent private and public land resources. Manage elk habitat in good or better condition within six management areas within the resource area to provide forage to sustain a total resource area target population level of 1,980 - 2,420.



The Big Springs Allotment falls within three larger elk management areas. The portion of the allotment north of Interstate 80 and west of the highway to Montello, Nevada falls within the Goose Creek Management Area. The portion of the allotment south of Interstate 80 falls within the Spruce/Pequop Management Area. The portion of the allotment north of Interstate 80 and east of the highway to Montello, Nevada falls within the Pilot Mountain Management Area. The conclusions pertaining to these three elk management areas are described under the allotment specific objectives below.

#### **4. Riparian/Stream Habitat**

Note: This RMP objective was directed at improving riparian/stream habitat for fish and thus improve riparian habitat for other resources. However, there is only one stream in this allotment (East Squaw Creek) and it is not classified as nor supports a fishery. Therefore, riparian habitat objectives in this allotment are addressed through the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health, and multiple use objectives for terrestrial riparian habitat.

#### **C. ALLOTMENT SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES INCLUDING RANGELAND PROGRAM SUMMARY (RPS) OBJECTIVES:**

1. *"Improve livestock distribution in the following pastures: Independence Valley, North Pequop Mountain, Collar and Elbow, Shafter, East Squaw Creek, East Pequop Bench, and Six-Mile Canyon."*
2. *"Improve or maintain all seasonal big game habitat in the Big Springs Allotment to good or excellent condition to provide forage and habitat capable of supporting the following reasonable numbers by 2005: 4,834 mule deer - 6,211 AUMs; 76 antelope - 182 AUMs; 22 bighorn sheep - 53 AUMs."*
3. *"Facilitate big game movements by modifying existing fences to Bureau standards where necessary (17 miles)."*
4. *"Improve, enhance, or develop 5 springs in the Big Springs Allotment to good or excellent condition."*
5. *"Improve crucial deer winter habitat by: cutting (thinning) within 17,000 acres of the pinyon/juniper forest type; chaining or burning and seeding 2,500 acres of sagebrush."*
6. *"Reintroduce bighorn sheep into the Goshute Mountains."*
7. *"Elk - (a.) Manage elk habitat in good or better condition within the Goose Creek Management Area to support a target elk population level of 1,070 plus or minus 10 percent. ( Note: Some of the elk are expected to utilize habitat in the Big Springs Allotment.)"*

*(b.) Manage elk habitat in good or better condition within the Spruce/Pequop Management Area to support a target elk population level of 340 plus or minus 10 percent. ( Note: Some of the elk are expected to utilize habitat in the Big Springs Allotment.)*

*(c.) Manage elk habitat in good or better condition within the Pilot Mountain Management Area to support a target elk population level of 250 plus or minus 10 percent. (Note: Some of the elk are expected to utilize habitat in the Big Springs Allotment.)"*

8. *"Manage for a wild horse herd size which will maintain a thriving ecological balance consistent with other multiple uses while remaining within the wild horse herd management area."*
9. *Remove sufficient wild horses to attain the initial herd size and maintain populations at a level which will maintain a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other resource values.*

**D. KEY AREA OBJECTIVES:**

1. Short Term Objectives:

The short term objectives are utilization objectives.

The utilization objective for native key forage grasses is as follows:

- 50% average use; not to exceed 55% in any single year.

The utilization objective for introduced seeded grasses is as follows:

- 65% average use; not to exceed 70% in any single year.

The utilization objective for native half-shrubs such as white sage and saltbush is as follows:

- 55% average use; not to exceed 60% in any single year.

The utilization objective for bitterbrush is as follows:

- 25% average use by livestock at the end of the summer use period;
- 45% average use by wildlife and livestock combined at end of winter.

The utilization objective applicable to wild horses is as follows:

- 10% average use by wild horses prior to entry by livestock on winter range;
- 55% average use by wild horses and livestock combined at end of winter.

2. Long Term Objectives:

The specific long term objectives for each key area have been listed below.

**4306-01** *"Maintain or improve the ecological condition at or above 48% of the potential natural community."*

*"Maintain or increase the percent frequency of Indian ricegrass and the needlegrass species."*

**4306-02** *Retain the utilization objective.*

**4306-03** *Establish new key areas for the Holborn Pasture.*

**4306-04** *Establish new key areas for the Holborn Pasture.*

**4306-06** *Establish new key areas for the Holborn Pasture.*

**4306-05** *"Maintain the ecological condition as measured in 1987 at 66% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Maintain or increase the frequency of Thurber needlegrass (STTH2)."*

**4306-08** *"Improve the ecological condition as measured in 1987 from 43% to 50% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Achieve a statistically significant upward trend on the key species AGSP by 1996."*

**4306-09** *"Improve the ecological condition as measured in 1987 from 43% to 50% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Achieve a statistically significant upward trend on the key species FEID, STCO4, AGSP, and PUTR2 by 1996."*

**4306-10** *"Improve the ecological condition as measured in 1987 from 50% to 55% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Achieve a statistically significant upward trend on the key species AGSP by 1996."*

*"Maintain a stable or static trend on the key species FEID by 1996."*

**4306-11** *"Maintain the ecological condition at 69% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Maintain a stable or static trend on the key specie FEID by 1996."*

*"Achieve a statistically significant upward trend on the key specie PUTR2"*

**4306-12** *"Maintain the ecological condition at 72% of PNC."*

*"Maintain a stable or static trend on the key species AGSP and SIHY."*

**4306-13** *"Improve the ecological condition as measured in 1987 from 52% to 60% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Achieve a statistically significant upward trend on the key species AGSP and PUTR2 by 1996."*

**4306-14** *"Maintain the ecological condition at 58% of PNC."*

*"Maintain a stable or static trend on the key species STTH2."*

**4306-16** *"Maintain the ecological condition at 89% of PNC."*

*"Maintain a stable or static trend on the key specie AGSP."*

**4306-17** *"Improve the ecological condition as measured in 1987 from 36% to 45% of PNC by 1996."*

*"Achieve a statistically significant upward trend on the key specie AGSP by 1996."*

**4306-19** Develop new objectives for this area following fire rehabilitation.

**4306-20** *"Maintain the ecological condition as measured at 80% of PNC."*

*"Maintain a stable or static trend on the key species EULA5 and ATNU2."*

**E. Riparian Objectives - See tables that follow.**

**BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT**

| Location  | Baseline Data                                    | Time Frame and Parameters  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
|   |  | 2 Years after Management Changes Implemented <sup>1</sup>  | 4 Years after Management Changes Implemented <sup>1</sup>   | Desired Condition 2010   |
| East Squaw Creek -<br>Upper East Squaw Creek Pasture<br><br>Squaw Creek Ranch Field | Nonfunctional<br><br>Functional at Risk (Static) | Functional at Risk - Upward Trend<br><br>Functional at Risk - Upward Trend<br><br>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.<br>Use on current years growth of willow is 35% or less.<br>No more than 30% of available aspen stems impacted by grazing. | Proper Functioning Condition<br><br>Proper Functioning Condition<br><br>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later. Use on current years growth of willow is 35% or less. No more than 30% of available aspen stems impacted by grazing. There will be less than 20% hummocking and hoof action of the surface area with recovery occurring after a season of rest. | Based on site potential, a riparian community composed of sedges and rushes, willow, and aspen is expected with at least two age classes of aspen and willow.<br><br>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later. Use on current years growth of willow is 35% or less. No more than 30% of available aspen stems impacted by grazing. There will be less than 20% hummocking and hoof action of the surface area with recovery occurring after a season of rest. |

<sup>1</sup> Implementation of interim grazing systems.



| <b>BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT</b>                            |                              |   |   |  |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Location</b>   | <b>Baseline Data</b>         | <b>Time Frame and Parameters</b>                                |   |  |
|   |                              | <b>2 Years after Management Changes Implemented<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>4 Years after Management Changes Implemented<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Desired Condition 2010</b>  |
| Lower Nanny Spring                                      | Proper Functioning Condition | Proper Functioning Condition                                    | Proper Functioning Condition                                    | <p>Based on site potential, a riparian herbaceous community composed primarily of sedges and rushes is expected with an aspen stand around the spring with at least two age classes of aspen expected.</p> <p>Fencing of the aspen is planned to ensure recruitment of younger aged trees to perpetuate the stand.</p> |
| <sup>1</sup> Implementation of interim grazing systems. |                              |   |   |  |

**BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT**

| Location     | Baseline Data | Time Frame and Parameters  |  |   |
|--------------|---------------|--|--|---|
|              |               | 2 Years after Management Changes Implemented <sup>1</sup>  | 4 Years after Management Changes Implemented <sup>1</sup>  | Desired Condition 2010  |
| Wally Spring | Nonfunctional | <p>Functional at Risk - Upward Trend</p> <p>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.</p> <p>Use on current years growth of willow is 35% or less.</p> <p>No more than 30% of available Aspen stems impacted by grazing.</p> | <p>Proper Functioning Condition</p> <p>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later. Use on current years growth of willow is 35% or less. No more than 30% of available Aspen stems impacted by grazing. There will be less than 20% hummocking and hoof action of the surface area with recovery occurring after a season of rest.</p> | <p>Based on site potential, a riparian herbaceous community composed primarily of sedges and rushes is expected with some willows at the spring and scattered along the stream course and an aspen stand at the base of the hill on the south side. At least two age classes of aspen and willow are expected.</p> <p>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later. Use on current years growth of willow is 35% or less. No more than 30% of available Aspen stems impacted by grazing. There will be less than 20% hummocking and hoof action of the surface area with recovery occurring after a season of rest.</p> |

<sup>1</sup> Implementation of interim grazing systems.

**BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT**

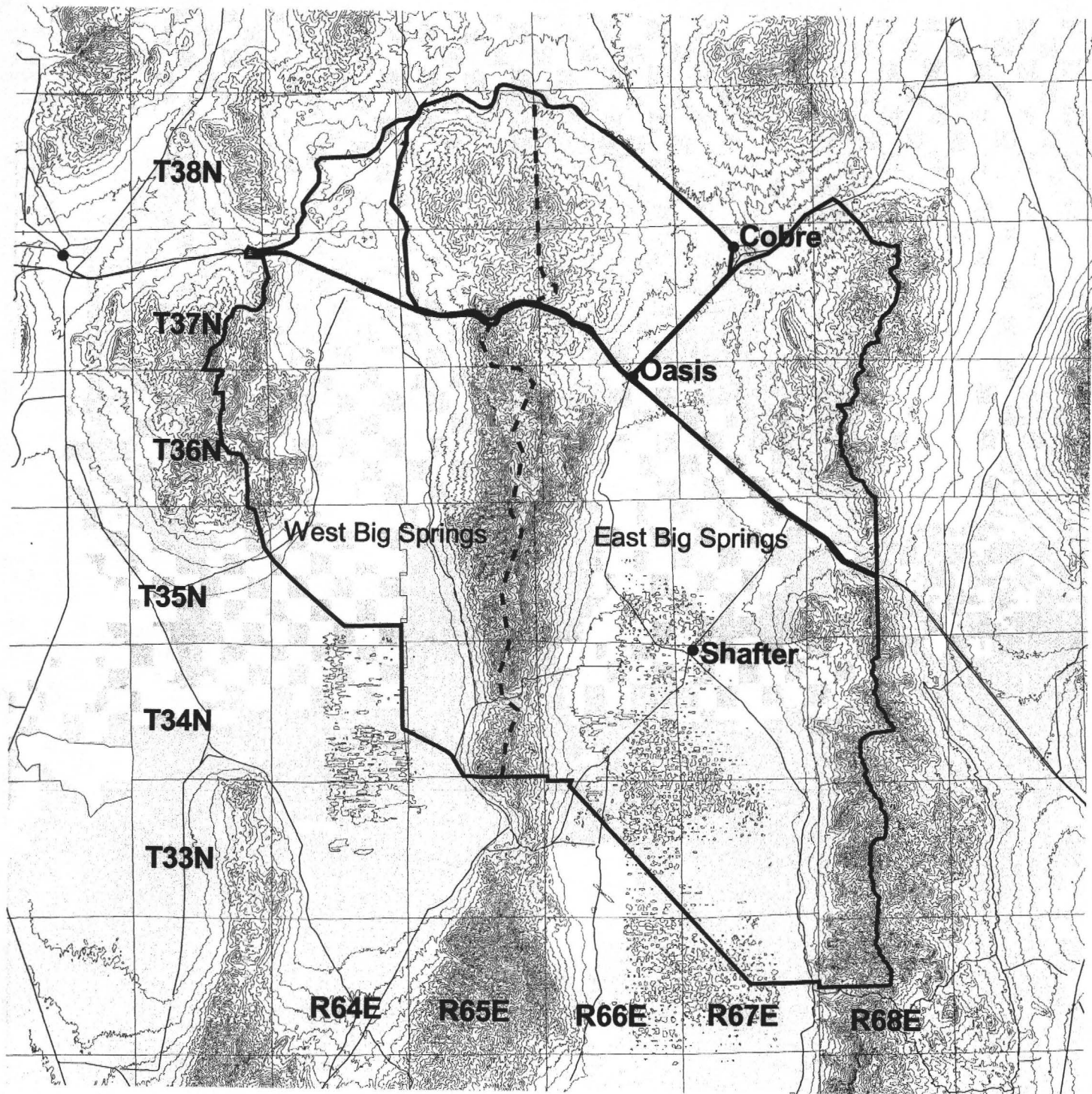
| Location      | Baseline Data                                 | Time Frame and Parameters  |  |  |
|---------------|---|--|--|--|
|               |   | 2 Years after Management Changes Implemented <sup>1</sup>  | 4 Years after Management Changes Implemented <sup>1</sup>  | Desired Condition 2010   |
| Other Springs | Nonfunctional and Functional at Risk (Static) | <p>Functional at Risk - Upward Trend</p> <p>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank and wet meadow areas at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later.</p> | <p>Proper Functioning Condition</p> <p>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank and wet meadow areas at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later. There will be less than 20% hummocking and hoof action of the surface area with recovery occurring after a season of rest.</p> | <p>Based on site potential of the springs, a riparian herbaceous community composed primarily of sedges and rushes is expected.</p> <p>A minimum of four (4) inches average stubble height of selected key herbaceous riparian species (sedges/rushes) will be left along the streambank and wet meadow areas at the end of the growing season or grazing season, whichever occurs later. There will be less than 20% hummocking and hoof action of the surface area with recovery occurring after a season of rest.</p> |

<sup>1</sup> Implementation of interim grazing systems or redesign of spring developments that are nonfunctional due to development design.

**Maps**  
**Big Springs Allotment**

# Map 1

## Big Springs East/West Division



- Contours (Interval = 50 meters)
- Cities
- Allotment Boundary
- East/West Division
- Roads
- Township/Range
- Land Status**
- Public (Administered by BLM)
- Private





# Map 2 Big Springs Allotment Proposed Projects Northern Pastures

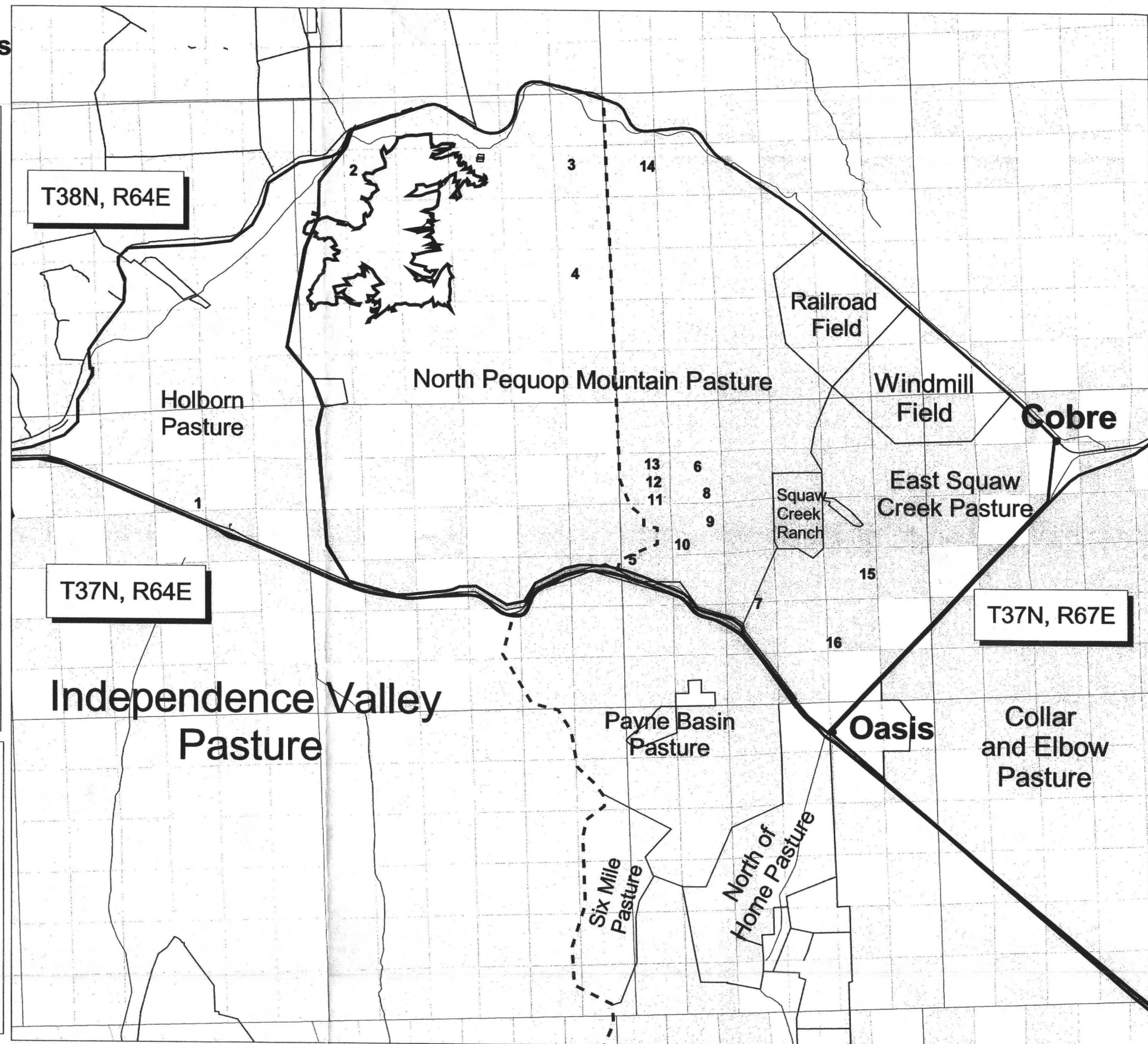
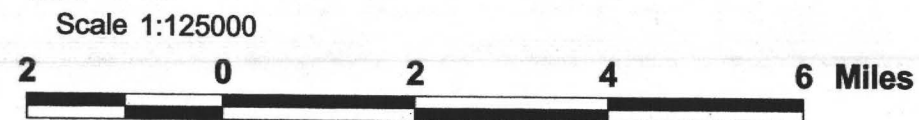
## West Big Springs Allotment

- Holburn Pasture
1. Seeding- up to 1000 acres
- North Pequop Mountain Pasture
2. Develop new water location
  3. Develop new water location
  4. Add a water storage tank to Pequop Well
  5. Construct east/west boundary fence from I-80 to Rocky Point

## East Big Springs Allotment

- North Pequop Mountain Pasture
5. Construct east/west boundary fence from I-80 to Rocky Point
  6. Construct fence which connects boundary fence to Squaw Creek Ranch Field
  7. Two miles of drift fence from I-80 to Squaw Creek Ranch Field
  8. East Squaw Creek enclosure
  9. Lower Beacon Spring enclosure
  10. Upper Beacon Spring enclosure
  11. Wally Spring enclosure and protect cutbank
  12. Middle fork of East Squaw Creek spring enclosure
  13. North fork of East Squaw Creek spring enclosure
  14. Extend a pipeline from the proposed well west half of pasture East Squaw Creek Pasture
- East Squaw Creek Pasture
15. 2.5 mile drift fence from Squaw Creek Field to Montello Highway
  16. Expand the seeding to 1200 acres and fence

- Cities
- ▭ Allotment Boundary
- ▭ Pasture divisions
- ▭ Fences/ Pasture Divisions
- ▭ East/West Division
- ▭ Roads
- ▭ West Pequop Fire- 2001
- ▭ Township/Range Sections
- Land Status
- ▭ Public (Administered by BLM)
- ▭ Private



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# Map 3 Big Springs Allotment Proposed Projects Southern Pastures

## West Big Springs Allotment

Independence Valley

1. Develop a new water location  
- Seeding up to 4000 acres of public land on locations within this pasture.

## East Big Springs Allotment

Payne Basin Pasture/ Six Mile Canyon

2. Fence Lower Nanny Spring- aspen enclosure \*
3. Drift fence near the bottom of canyon

\*Upper Nanny, Adele & Milkhouse Springs to be fenced also.  
East Pequop Bench Pasture

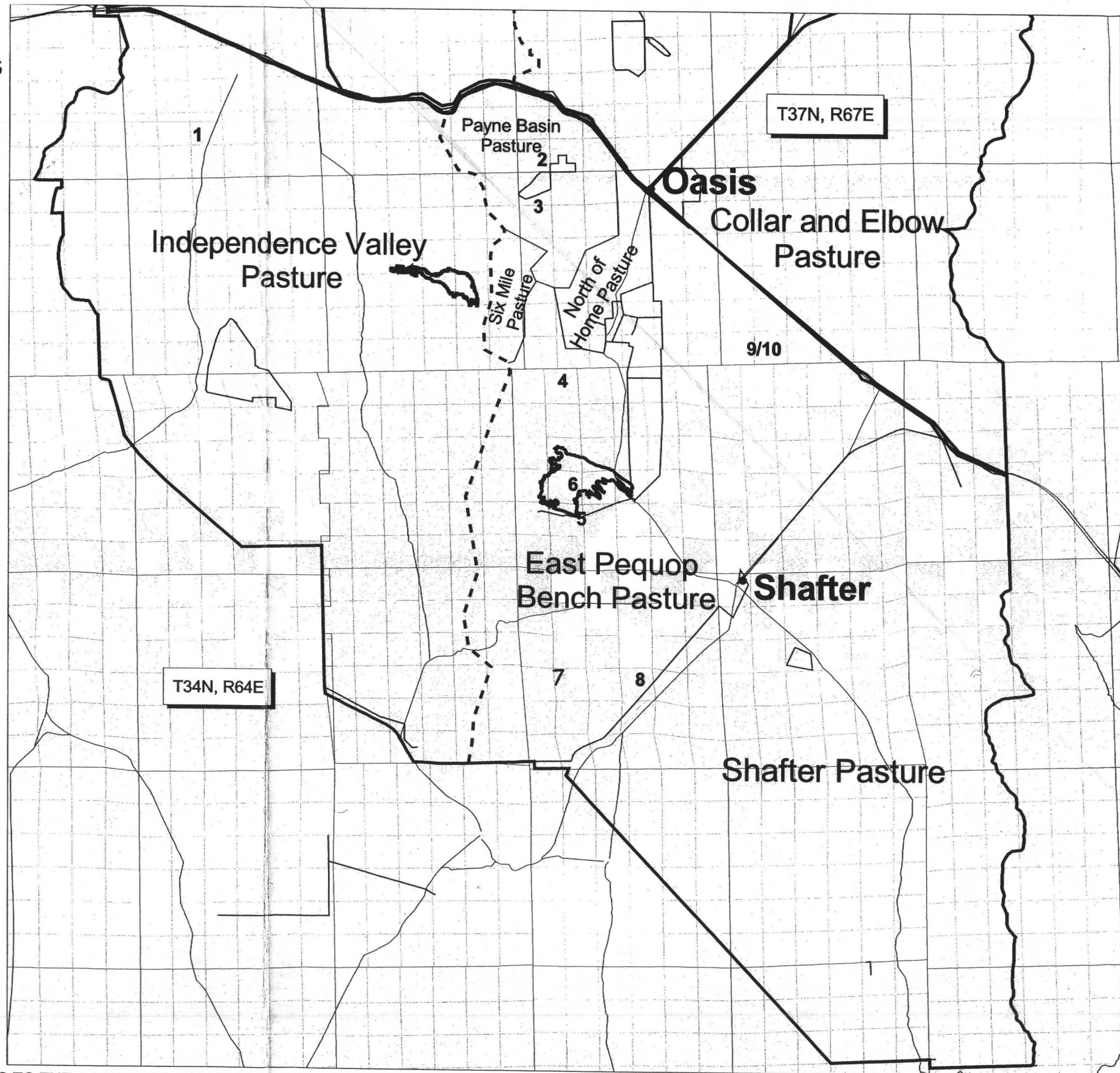
4. Construct a drift fence near the bottom of Long Canyon
5. Add an 8000 gallon water storage tank to Burnt Well
6. Seeding of up to 3000 acres within Big Springs Fire
7. Construct a reservoir in the vicinity of South Well to catch spring runoff and add 8000 gallon water storage tank
8. Develop a new well
9. Develop a seeding of up to 4000 acres north of West Wendover pipeline
10. Install four pipeline extensions for above seeding



- Pasture\_divisions.shp
- Wendover
- Dist\_cities
- Allotment Boundary
- East/West Division
- Roads
- Fences/ Pasture Divisions
- Big Springs Fire- 2000
- Mile marker 367- 2001
- Twprng
- Trs
- Land Status**
- Public (Administered by BLM)
- Private

5 0 5 Miles










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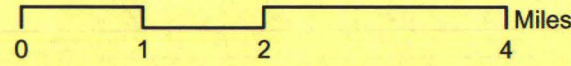


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**LEGEND**

-  Allotment Boundary
-  Fences
-  Proposed Big Springs Division Fence
-  Allotment Boundary (Un-fenced)
-  Proposed Upper Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture Fence
-  Public (BLM Admin.)
-  Private
-  BLM District Boundary
-  Cities



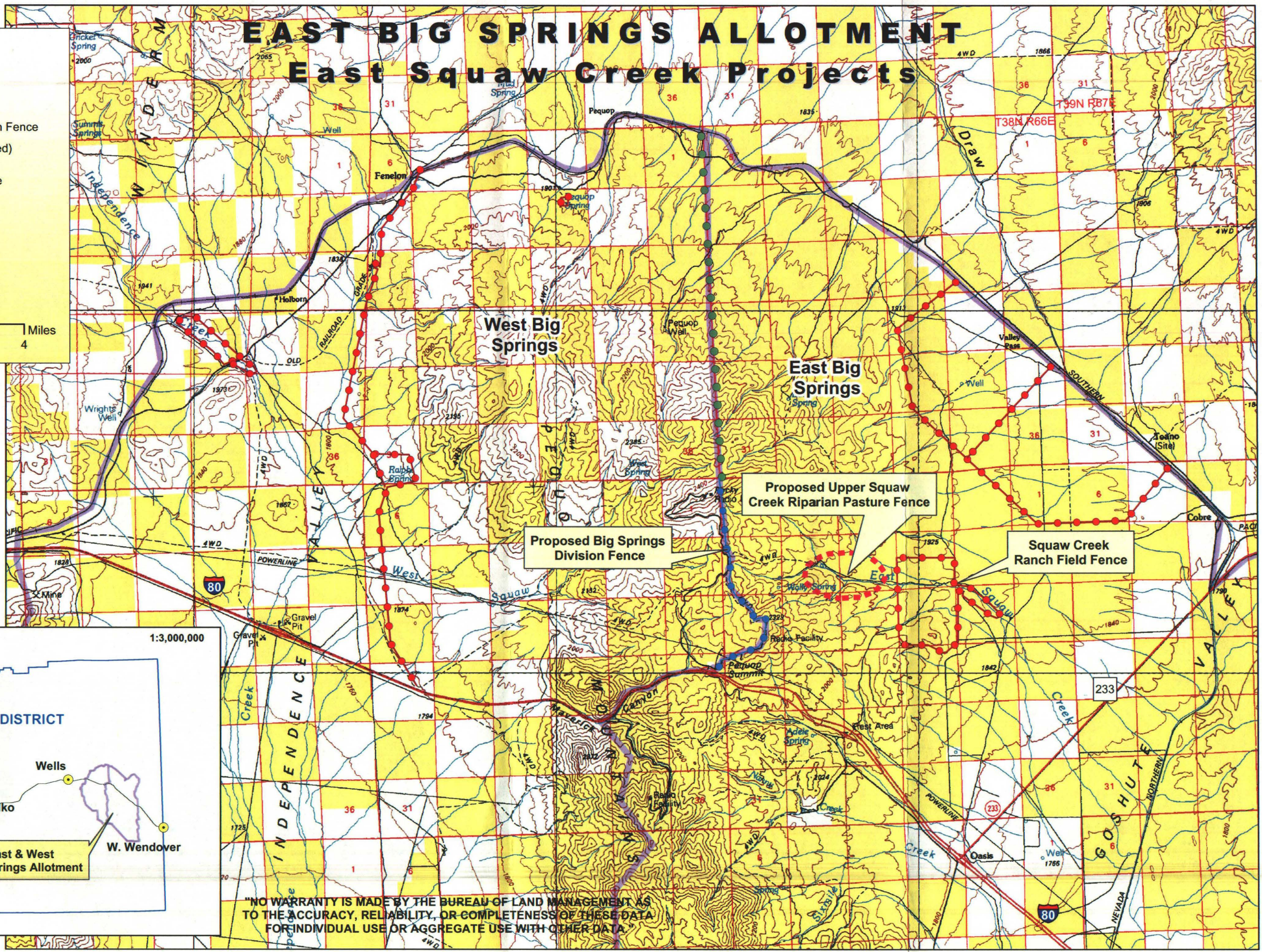
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Elko Field Office - kmd - 04-14-05



# EAST BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT

## East Squaw Creek Projects



West Big Springs

East Big Springs

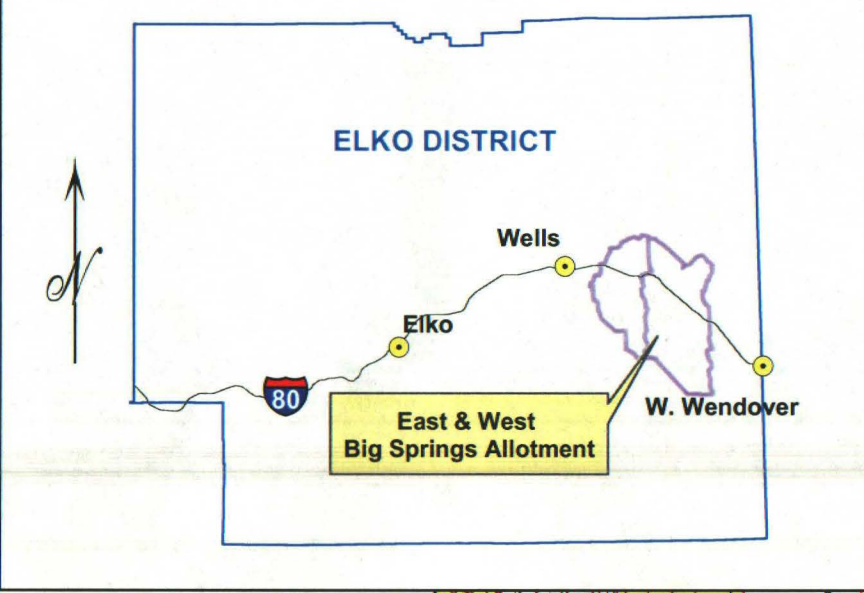
Proposed Big Springs Division Fence

Proposed Upper Squaw Creek Riparian Pasture Fence

Squaw Creek Ranch Field Fence

**LOCATION MAP**

1:3,000,000



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**BIG SPRINGS ALLOTMENT  
RESPONSE TO POINTS OF PROTEST  
FOLLOWING ISSUANCE OF PROPOSED MULTIPLE USE DECISION**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

This report responds to the protest points raised in response to the Big Springs Proposed Multiple Use Decision issued in October of 2001.

The Big Springs Allotment Evaluation was issued in September of 2000. A 30-day comment period was provided for public input into the evaluation and recommended management actions. Changes to the evaluation following the public comment period were incorporated into a Proposed Multiple Use Decision (PMUD) that was issued in October of 2001. The PMUD proposed to implement the management actions recommended in the evaluation. Affected members of the interested public were given fifteen days to protest the proposed decision. Three protest letters were received, one from the Committee for Idaho's High Desert (dated 9 October 2001), one from Parasol Ranching L.L.C. (dated 23 October 2001), and one from Western Watersheds Project (dated 25 October 2001). Several changes will be incorporated into the FMUD as a result of the protests received. These changes are discussed in our responses to the protest points below. Copies of the protest letters are available for review at the Elko Field Office.

**B. RESPONSES TO PROTEST POINTS**

**Committee for Idaho's High Desert**

*Point #1: "We Protest the construction of new wells in the Independence Valley Pasture, the NW Pequop Mtn. Pasture and NE Pequop Valley Pasture, as well as the Lower Hardy Creek Well and all other wells. BLM has failed to analyze deleterious impacts to native wildlife, vegetation, recreational aesthetic and spiritual uses of public lands, and to biodiversity."*

**Response:** The Elko Field Office has completed an Environmental Assessment analyzing the impacts of the actions proposed for implementation. Further site-specific Environmental Assessments will be completed as needed to analyze impacts of specific projects before any work begins.

*Point #2: "We Protest the construction of spring developments (aka spring-gutting projects). These projects permanently destroy wetlands. Plus, BLM fails to describe their location so can not have analyzed impacts."*

**Response:** The Elko Field Office is going to assess on a case-by-case basis what springs will be re-developed. Site-specific environmental assessments will be completed prior to any work on spring re-development. Current protocols require that any spring developments be done in such a way that the riparian ecosystems are maintained.

**Point #3:** *"We Protest increasing AUMs in the Holborn, Lower Squaw Ranch, East Squaw Creek, Windmill Seeding, Railroad Field pastures and in any other areas where livestock use is increased."*

**Response:** New carrying capacity assessments were performed through the evaluation process. Most of these assessments resulted in a decrease in AUMs authorized for livestock use. One of the areas where an increase is shown is a seeding that never had a carrying capacity adjustment following establishment of the seeding. AUMs increased for livestock are only proposed in those areas where the increase is compatible with the attainment of all multiple-use objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health.

**Point #4:** *"We Protest new "seedings"-undoubtedly of crested wheatgrass."*

**Response:** The seeding proposed as a result of this evaluation will be multi-species mixes of desirable grasses, shrubs/half shrubs, and forbs. Crested wheatgrass has not been ruled out as a possible grass species for use in the seedings. Seedings are proposed predominately in those areas where there is a paucity of grasses and forbs in areas dominated by sagebrush and rabbitbrush plants. Species selected for the seedings will provide for greater forage diversity and better wildlife habitat and will be those species expected to thrive in the soil and location in which they are planted. Site-specific environmental assessments will be completed prior to implementation of any seedings.

**Point #5:** *"We Protest BLM's failure to adequately analyze impacts of the proposed decision on WSA values-recreational, scenic, naturalness, primitive and unconfined recreation"*

**Response:** The completed environmental assessment assesses impacts of the final decision on the Bluebell Wilderness Study Area (WSA). In addition, livestock impacts in the WSA were discussed in the Allotment Evaluation and the Management Action Selection Report. Please refer to those documents for additional information.

**Point #6:** *"We Protest BLM's failure to protect WSA's from livestock degradation."*

**Response:** See response to point #5.

**Point #7:** *"We Protest the construction of new fences-BLM Has failed to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives-such as requiring active herding."*

**Response:** Active herding of livestock is expected in some pastures during the interim grazing system and is a permanent expectation in other pastures, such as the North Pequop Mountain, Independence Valley, and Shafter pastures. Fencing is only proposed for those areas where active control of livestock is needed the most, such as exclusion from riparian areas, new



seedings, and aspen stands. Proposed projects are subject to additional environmental review, where warranted, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

*Point #8: "We Protest the seeding of lands near existing and proposed livestock concentration/sacrifice zones. BLM is simply covering up the rampant over-grazing and trampling that occurs in these locations by seeding the exotic non-palatable soil-depleting crested wheatgrass."*

**Response:** Some of the proposed seedings are associated with existing waters to take advantage of those waters. Species selected for the seedings would be desirable species to be placed in areas that are inherently poor in herbaceous plants. The seedings are intended primarily to provide more desirable habitat and forage for wildlife species as well as livestock forage.

*Point #9: "We Protest BLM's failure to comply with the Clean Water Act."*

**Response:** The BLM is currently in full compliance with the Clean Water Act. The Big Springs Allotment does not contain any classified or impaired waters as listed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection. There are several isolated springs and one stream which fall under the unclassified waters of the State that have narrative standards, which these water are meeting. Non-the-less, the actions to be implemented through the FMUD will improve riparian conditions and result in an improvement of water quality.

*Point #10: "We Protest the numerous pipeline extensions. BLM has failed to sufficiently analyze impacts."*

**Response:** The completed environmental assessment for the FMUD analyzed the ideas of pipeline extensions at the activity plan level. Further site-specific environmental assessments will be completed prior to commencement of any work on these projects.

*Point #11: "We Protest BLM's failure to apply stubble height and bank trampling standards to all perennial and ephemeral wetland areas throughout the allotment."*

**Response:** Stubble height and utilization standards are being applied to most areas to be grazed by livestock in the allotment. The remaining riparian areas will be better protected through exclusion of livestock from the riparian area and/or incorporation of the affected area into a grazing system expected to achieve proper functioning condition (PFC) and management objectives for riparian areas.

In addition to the riparian protection fencing proposed in the PMUD, the FMUD will include actions to install permanent fences around several springs associated with the Payne Basin Pasture. The names of the additional springs to have permanent fencing installed are: Adele

Spring, Milk House Spring, and Upper and Lower Nanny Creek Springs. Observations of cattle use in these riparian areas during the current dry cycle indicate a downward trend in functioning condition; therefore we plan to install riparian protection fences.

*Point #12: "We Protest BLM's failure to apply a 6" stubble height standard to riparian areas."*

**Response:** The 4" stubble height applied is considered adequate to achieve and maintain desired conditions and objectives.

*Point #13: "We Protest BLM tiering to the out-dated Wells RMP."*

**Response:** The BLM considers the Wells Resource Management Plan to be a viable document today. The Wells RMP and the associated Environmental Impact Statement analyzed impacts to the resource area under five different management scenarios. The final Environmental Impact Statement for the Wells Resource Management Plan (Wells RMP/EIS) analyzed several proposed actions which included different levels of grazing use and the impacts of these alternatives on other resources. The alternatives analyzed included the following alternatives: 1). No Action Alternative, 2). Resource Production Alternative, 3). Midrange Alternative, 4). Resource Protection Alternative, and 5). Preferred Alternative. A sixth alternative, no livestock grazing, was initially considered and then rejected because it was impractical for general application in the resource area.

The selected management decisions were documented in the Record of Decision for the Wells RMP as follows:

Management Decision :1. Develop activity plans on 24 Category I allotments and grazing systems on Category M and C allotments as needed. 4. Monitor and adjust grazing management systems and livestock numbers as required."

Standard Operating Procedures: "5. ...Livestock use adjustments are most often made by changing one or more of the following: the class or kind of livestock grazing on an allotment, the season-of-use, the stocking rate, or the pattern of grazing. Livestock use adjustments may be implemented through agreement or decision in compliance with existing regulation. When livestock use adjustments are implemented by decision, the decision will be based on adequate data, monitoring the resource conditions, and after consultation with the affected permittee. Current BLM policy emphasizes the use of systematic monitoring programs to identify the need for livestock adjustments...; 6. ...Monitoring...and other studies will be used in making any grazing decision."

The analytical approach used for the EIS is similar to what would be conducted today. The Wells ROD (page 11) states that the RMP includes a balanced approach to land management within the resource area by allowing provisions for the protection of fragile and unique resources

while not overly restricting the ability of other resources to provide economic goods and services. The RMP is a practical combination of features from all the alternatives that were analyzed. Prior to formulating alternatives, inventory data to define the management situation, assess public demand for public land resources, and predict the ability of these resources to meet that demand were accumulated and analyzed in the EIS.

The Wells RMP/EIS addressed both short and long-term impacts of the alternatives considered. The biological, physical, economic, and social impacts of implementing each of the alternatives developed for the RMP were predicted and described in the RMP/EIS. The Preferred Alternative contains an analysis of cumulative impacts to each resource.

The environmental analysis conducted through the Wells RMP/EIS, coupled with the environmental assessment that has been completed regarding management actions to be implemented on the Big Springs Allotment, contains the needed elements for a site specific analysis at the activity plan level. Rangeland improvement projects such as fencing, seedings and water developments proposed at the activity plan level will be subject to further review in compliance with NEPA.

***Point #14:*** “We Protest the decision to use prescribed fire to thin junipers, and the entire fire management plan. BLM must first deal with reining in the continuing abusive grazing on these lands.”

**Response:** The Fire Management Plan has been removed from the Final Multiple Use Decision. Proposals to apply fire as a management tool will be processed separate from the Big Springs FMUD.

***Point #15:*** “We Protest BLM’s failure to develop reasonable protective objectives for the land, soils and watersheds.”

**Response:** Objectives outlined are consistent with achievement of Resource Management Plan objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health.

***Point #16:*** “We Protest BLM’s obscenely high Key Area utilization objectives. These are not based on science, and will kill native and even exotic grass species.”

**Response:** Utilization objectives are based on proper use guidelines and standards developed in Nevada over a number of years. The deferred rotational grazing systems proposed for most of the pastures will ensure increased vigor in forage species by deferring grazing use until after the critical growing season at least two out of every four years.

10/2001



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



INFORMATION ON TAKING APPEALS TO THE BOARD OF LAND  
APPEALS

DO NOT APPEAL UNLESS

1. This decision is adverse to you AND 2. You believe it is incorrect

IF YOU APPEAL, THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES *MUST* BE FOLLOWED:

1. NOTICE OF APPEAL:

Within 30 days file a *NOTICE OF APPEAL* in the office which issued this decision (SEE CFR SECS. 4.411 AND 4.413) You may state your reasons for appealing, if you desire.

2. WHERE TO FILE NOTICE OF APPEAL:

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ELKO FIELD OFFICE  
3900 E. IDAHO STREET  
ELKO, NV 89801

and a copy to

OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR  
SALT LAKE CITY FIELD OFFICE  
6201 FEDERAL BUILDING  
125 SOUTH STATE STREET  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84138

3. STATEMENT OF REASONS:

Within 30 days after filing the *NOTICE OF APPEAL*, file a COMPLETE statement of the reasons why you are appealing. This must be filed with the:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, BOARD OF LAND APPEALS  
4015 WILSON BLVD.,  
ARLINGTON, VA 22203

(SEE 43 CFR SEC. 4.412 AND 4.413). If you fully stated your reasons for appealing when filing the *NOTICE OF APPEAL*, no additional statement is necessary. ALSO SEND A COPY TO REGIONAL SOLICITOR.

4. ADVERSE PARTIES:

Within 15 days after each document is filed, each adverse party named in the decision and the Regional Solicitor must be served with a copy of:

- A. THE *NOTICE OF APPEAL*
- B. THE STATEMENT OF REASONS, AND
- C. ANY OTHER DOCUMENT FILED (SEE 43 CFR SEC. 4.413).

5. PROOF OF SERVICE:

Within 15 days after any document is served on an adverse party, file proof of that service with the BOARD OF LAND APPEALS, at the above address. This may consist of a certified or registered mail "return receipt card" signed by the adverse party (SEE 43 CFR SEC. 4.401(C)(2)).

UNLESS THESE PROCEDURES ARE FOLLOWED YOUR APPEAL WILL BE SUBJECT TO DISMISSAL (SEE 43 CFR SEC. 4.402): Be certain that all communications are identified by serial number of the case being appealed.

NOTE: A DOCUMENT IS NOT FILED UNTIL IT IS ACTUALLY RECEIVED IN THE PROPER OFFICE (SEE CFR SEC. 4.401(A))



## Western Watersheds Project

**Point #17:** "1. WWP protests the lack of any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliant analysis of this proposed decision. At a minimum, the BLM must prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine the environmental effects of the proposed action and reasonable alternatives and to determine if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. The Wells RMP EIS is now over 14 years old and no longer can qualify as a legally compliant NEPA document since circumstances have changed on the ground significantly since that time. A Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) is not sufficient compliance with NEPA considering that the proposed decision will affect tens of thousands of acres of BLM-managed lands in northeastern Nevada. WWP notes that there is no DNA included with this PMUD in any case. It is especially troubling that the BLM has not identified or analyzed reasonable alternatives to this proposed decision, which could include at a minimum the following alternatives: no grazing, reducing grazing by cattle by 50 percent and 80 percent."

**Response:** Please see the response to Protest Point #13 above for a discussion on the Wells RMP and EIS and the alternatives considered in those documents. In addition, an environmental assessment has been completed to further analyze the impacts created through changes in management as a result of this decision.

**Point #17:** "2. WWP protests the lack of any assessment of the allocation of forage between livestock, watershed health, and wildlife especially in light of the Comb Wash decision and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act legal requirement that the BLM make a determination which balances the interests of the American public for healthy unfenced public lands with large, viable, and increasing populations of native wildlife against the business interests of two permittees. In this light the notification of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to the BLM in their comments for this PMUD that there are only 150 antelope on this allotment when the BLM is proposing to authorize over 16,000 AUMs for cattle is a remarkable admission of inadequacy by the BLM. WWP recommends that the BLM provide a minimum of 90 percent of available forage for wildlife and watershed health in any legally compliant NEPA document."

**Response:** Please see the discussion on alternatives considered and selected in the Wells RMP and EIS as discussed in the response to protest point #13 above. The Big Springs Evaluation outlines a number of habitat objectives for wildlife species and riparian/watershed health. The evaluation also contains an assessment of carrying capacity and allocation of forage between livestock and wild horses in relation to achieving the specified wildlife habitat and riparian/watershed objectives. Further discussion of this issue can be found in the BLM's response to comments made to the evaluation by the Nevada Division of Wildlife contained in the Management Action Selection Report.

**Point #18:** "3. WWP protests the failure of the BLM to require annual water quality monitoring for all surface waters on the allotment to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act and Nevada state water quality standards."



**Response:** See response to protest point #9 above. The BLM has established water quality monitoring on the East Fork of Squaw Creek. Monitoring results have shown high levels of turbidity, suspended solids, and fecal coliform, but all measurements have been within water quality standards as set by the State of Nevada.

*Point #19: "4. WWP protests the failure of the BLM to include NEPA compliant analysis of the proposed seedings which are included in the PMUD. Nowhere in the PMUD does the BLM describe what these seedings are to be in terms of plant species (the PMUD states only that grasses, shrubs/half shrubs, and forbs will be seeded without identifying whether these are native of non-native species; occasionally the BLM mentions that forage kockia, which is a non-native plant, and "desirable grasses" will be seeded—without further explanation), and the agency fails to analyze the need for these seeding, whether native wildlife species will benefit, or what the existing condition is of the lands proposed to be used for the seeding as required by law. Even though the proposed multiple-use decision is dependent on the implementation of these seedings as well as numerous other water and fencing developments, the agency will not analyze these installations under NEPA until some later time, thereby prejudging the outcome of any future NEPA analysis and committing the BLM to actions which may be deleterious to other values which currently remain un-addressed."*

**Response:** Implementation of the proposed seedings will be beneficial for multiple use management in the allotment; however, absent the seedings, management to be applied through the grazing systems and other practices and proposed projects are expected to result in significant progress towards achievement of the standards for rangeland health and multiple use objectives. The allotment evaluation, management action selection report, and proposed multiple use decision all describe the purposes of the proposed seedings which are to increase vegetative production and diversity for livestock and wildlife, particularly antelope. Vegetation diversity was generally identified as a limiting habitat attribute for antelope and the addition of forage kochia and forbs to the seed mix will improve vegetation diversity. The increased vegetative production for livestock use will also provide a forage reserve during dry cycles that will improve consistency in livestock stocking rates and management over the long-term. If the proposed seeding projects are not implemented, the benefits of the seedings will not be realized. Please see responses to protest points #4 and #8 above, and the environmental assessment that analyzes implementation of the selected actions, for a discussion of the condition of the land associated with the proposed seeding locations, as well as other information.

*Point #20: "5. WWP protests the lack of any cost information for the implementation of the PMUD, especially in light of the absurdly low level of the current grazing fee and available 8100 and 7120 funds. The agency must include the cost of all proposed installations and the cost of future administrative costs of agency management and monitoring actions before any final decision is issued".*

**Response:** The Bureau manages for multiple uses and believes the proposed projects will provide benefits to the public, wildlife, and livestock permittees. Please see the response to

comment #34 from the Nevada Division of Wildlife contained within the Management Action Selection Report dealing with the cost of the proposed range improvements.

**Point #21:** *"6. WWP protests the authorization of cattle grazing use in several units as "period of use to be defined on an annual basis" for the Six Mile Canyon, East Squaw Creek South Seeding, Windmill Seeding, and the North of Home units. This lack of specificity coupled with the BLM's historical compliant and deferential attitude toward permittees assures that the public interest can no longer be met in these units should this decision be implemented as proposed. The BLM must identify periods of use in any final decision so that the permittees and the agency can be held accountable."*

**Response:** This point is well taken regarding the question as to the criteria BLM will use to guide management in the Six Mile Canyon and North of Home Pastures. To clarify, wording is being added to the FMUD which states the following:

Six Mile Canyon - If this pasture is grazed annually during the critical growth period of the key forage species (5/15 - 7/15), utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 40%. If this pasture is deferred at least two out of four years until 7/15, utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 50%.

North of Home - If this pasture is grazed annually during the critical growth period of the key forage species (5/1 - 6/30), utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 40%. If this pasture is deferred at least two out of four years until 7/1, utilization will be managed so as not to exceed 50%.

In response to this protest point regarding the East Squaw Creek South Seeding and the Windmill Seeding, the proposed decision outlined specific seasons of use, with specific dates of use to be determined on an annual basis. Generally, the seedings will be grazed in the spring/summer with use later in the year dependent on the regrowth and condition of the plants at that time. The BLM believes these seedings can normally handle annual use during the spring and remain healthy. The PMUD also states the seedings will be deferred periodically to allow a recovery following dry years when there is little regrowth.

**Point #22:** *"7. WWP protests the lack of any bank trampling standard for riparian areas on the allotment. A maximum bank trampling standard of 10 percent for degraded riparian areas accessible to livestock is essential since the proposed standards of stubble height and browse utilization are often not exceeded until well after stream, spring, wet meadow, and seep banks are heavily trampled by livestock which always congregate in these areas."*

**Response:** The stubble height criteria for herbaceous species and utilization criteria on woody riparian species in the decision coupled with the brief periods of use are considered adequate attributes to monitor.

**Parasol Ranching LLC** (Synthesized from protest letter)

*Point #23: 1. Reduction in livestock AUMs in Shafter Pasture from 6633 to 3193. Wild Horses have historically used 1815 AUMs over AML. These 1815 should be added to the 3193 figure, showing a new total in the Shafter Pasture of 5008 livestock AUMs. The remainder of the AUMs subject to a cut (2185) should be re-distributed, with 1000 AUMs cut from Collar and Elbow and the remainder in East Squaw Creek, allowing flexibility of use in years with increased moisture and forage.*

**Response:** We believe that the data used on wild horse use is the best available representation of actual use. Although the comment speaks to wild horse use over a 12-month period, the limiting factor upon which AML was established was horse use prior to the winter livestock use period on Shafter pasture. AUM allocation is based on total calculated carrying capacity in each pasture. Additional adjustments may be made in the future following collection of additional data. Please refer to the response to comment #1 in the MASR for further information.

Regarding the reduction in livestock use, the reduction in AUMs will be placed in suspension until such time as additional analysis of the carrying capacity is conducted following implementation of the grazing system and proposed projects. At this time, there seems to be a low likelihood of the suspended AUMs being returned to active use on a permanent basis; however, a determination as to whether or not the suspended AUMs are likely to be returned to active use or eliminated may be better judged after the grazing systems and implemented projects have had an opportunity to operate.

*Point #24: 2. Wild Horse intake only calculated for 5 months.*

**Response:** Wild horse use for the full year was included in the carrying capacity calculations. The methods and rationale used for determining wild horse use levels are well documented on page 105 of the Allotment Evaluation. Please also refer to the response to comment #1 in the MASR.

*Point #25: 3. Big Spring's efforts to manage rangelands have been crippled from the Bureau's mismanagement is allowing over use of Wild Horses, Elk, and low percentages used in figuring feed intakes for both Wild Horses and Elk.*

**Response:** Please see the response to comment #1 on over-use by wild horses in the Management Action Selection Report. The BLM currently has no data showing excessive use by elk in the allotment.