

A 24-Year History of Cliven Bundy's Illegal Grazing and Armed Conflict at Gold Butte Nevada

Prepared by the Center for Biological Diversity

- The Bundy family began grazing on federal public lands near Gold Butte, Nevada, in 1954 – lands located in the recently designated Gold Butte National Monument – some of the driest and most fragile desert in North America.
- In 1973 the Bundys were granted their first federal grazing permit. Given the aridity and fragility of the desert, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a permit for grazing in this [ephemeral](#) range, which is subject to environmental and other conditions. Ephemeral range in the southwest desert region does not consistently produce forage for grazing.
- In 1989 the desert tortoise was granted protection under the federal Endangered Species Act because of widespread destruction of its fragile desert habitat by livestock grazing, urbanization and other factors.
- In 1991, the U.S. and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) issued a draft Biological Opinion (BO) governing the management of desert tortoise habitat. The BLM developed a timetable to meet its requirements and shared the requirements and timetable with permittees, including Cliven Bundy, whose cattle grazed in tortoise habitat. The BLM requested and FWS then agreed to delay implementation of the BO until 1993.
- On February 26th, 1993, Cliven Bundy sent two “Administrative Notices of Intent” to the BLM asserting that the BLM has no legal jurisdiction over federal public lands, and stating his intent to graze cattle, “pursuant to my vested grazing rights.” Bundy stopped paying his grazing fees after February 28th of 1993.
- The BLM sent Bundy a notice that his request for a grazing application had not been received and requested that he re-submit within one week or BLM action would be taken.
- On July 13, 1993, BLM sent Bundy a Trespass Notice and Order to Remove which set a timeline for cattle removal given his non payment of fees. Later BLM extended the timetable at Bundy's request.
- On September 30, 1993, the Nevada State BLM Director requested injunctive relief—action from the court—to address Bundy's unlawful cattle grazing.
- On January 24, 1994 BLM tried to deliver to Bundy a proposed decision to cancel his permit, request payment of trespass damages, and order the removal of trespass livestock. When BLM delivered the notice, Bundy's son tore up the document. The torn document was recovered and used as evidence of illegal grazing by the BLM in court.
- On March 3, 1994, Cliven Bundy, given his refusal to recognize federal authority to own and administer federal lands, sent payment for his grazing permit to Clark

County instead of the BLM. The county refused Bundy's payment for lack of jurisdiction.

- In 1998, the U.S. Attorney filed suit requesting that the federal district court order Bundy to remove his cattle and pay outstanding grazing fees and fines totaling now more than \$150,000.
- In October 1998, the BLM approved a new Resource Management Plan for the Las Vegas Field Office. The plan allowed for the closure of grazing allotments in critical tortoise habitats, including the Bunkerville allotment.
- On November 3, 1998, United States District Judge Johnnie Rawlinson permanently enjoined Bundy from grazing his livestock within the Bunkerville allotment. Rawlinson assessed fines against Bundy, affirmed federal authority over federal land, and wrote that "[t]he government has shown commendable restraint in allowing this trespass to continue for so long without impounding Bundy's livestock." [Cite.](#)
- Bundy refused to comply with the order. He filed an emergency motion for stay to try and halt the court ruling while he appealed the case to the Ninth Circuit Court.
- On May 14th, 1999, the Ninth Circuit Court denied Bundy's appeal and upheld the district court decision ordering the removal of Bundy's cattle from the Bunkerville allotment. [Cite.](#)
- On September 17th, 1999, after Bundy refused to comply with the court's earlier orders, the Federal District Court again ordered Bundy to comply with the earlier permanent injunction and assessed additional fines.
- In December 1998, in order to mitigate harm to desert tortoise from urban sprawl, Clark County purchased the federal grazing permit to the Bunkerville Allotment for \$375,000. The county retired the allotment to protect the desert tortoise. With the ongoing trespass cattle, Clark County inquired as to the rights of Cliven Bundy to be on the allotment. In a July, 2002 memo the BLM stated that the "Mr. Bundy has no right to occupy or graze livestock in the Bunkerville grazing allotment. Two court decisions, one in Federal District Court and another in the Circuit Court of Appeals, fully supports our positions."
- On April 2, 2008 the BLM sent Bundy a [notice of cancellation](#), cancelling Bundy's range improvement permit and a cooperative agreement. The notice called for the removal of his range improvements, such as gates and water infrastructure.
- On May 9, 2008 Cliven Bundy sent a document entitled "Constructive Notice" to local, county, state, and federal officials, including the BLM. It claimed that Bundy had rights to graze on the Bunkerville Allotment; it called on state and county officials to protect those rights from the federal government; and it responded to the BLM's April 2 Notice of Cancellation by saying he has not ignored it, and that he will do whatever it takes to protect grazing rights.
- In 2011, BLM sent Bundy a cease-and-desist order and notice of intent to roundup his trespass cattle.

- In 2012, BLM aerial surveys estimated about 1000 trespass cattle remained.
- In April 2012, the BLM at the last moment canceled plans to roundup trespass cattle to ensure the safety of people involved in the roundup after Cliven Bundy made violent threats against BLM.
- On July 2013, U.S. District Court of Nevada again affirmed that Bundy has no legal rights to graze cattle. It ordered Bundy to remove his cattle from public lands within 45 days and authorized the U.S. government to seize and impound any remaining cattle thereafter. [Cite.](#)
- In October 2013, after an appeal by Bundy, the federal court again affirmed that Bundy had no legal right to graze cattle on federal public lands. The court ordered the removal of cattle within 45 days and ordered Bundy not to interfere with the round-up. [Cite.](#)
- In March 2014, the BLM issued a notice of intent to impound Bundy's trespass cattle and closed the area to the public for the duration of the action.
- On April 5, 2014 the roundup began.
- On April 9, 2014 heavily armed militia from across the U.S. converged on the Bundy Ranch to confront federal officials conducting the roundup.
- On April 12, about 300 cattle that had been rounded up and held in a corral were released by the BLM after the heavily armed militia confronted and aimed rifles at federal agents. The BLM canceled the roundup out of safety concerns for employees and the public.
- In April 2015, Bundy held a weekend barbecue and "Liberty Celebration" to mark the one-year anniversary of the standoff.
- In June, 2015, shots were fired near public land surveyors working in the Gold Butte area. BLM orders all employees to stay away from Gold Butte.
- On Feb 11, 2016, Cliven Bundy was arrested at the Portland, Oregon airport on his way to support his son's paramilitary occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon.
- As of February, 2017, Bundy's trespass cattle continue to graze illegally on federal public lands near Gold Butte.