United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Arizona Strip Field Office
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St. George, Utah 84790
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In Reply Refer To:
A100: 4160 (0201547)

SEP 2 1 2015

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Deone Baird Operator #0201547
c/o Donald A. Baird
P.O. Box 87
Glendale, UT. 84729

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
and
NOTICE OF PROPOSED DECISION

For the Rock Pockets Allotment Grazing Permit Renewal
analyzed within the Proposed Action of the
Arizona Strip Field Office
Environmental Assessment #DOI-BLM-AZ-A010-2013-0010-EA

INTRODUCTION

This Notice of Proposed Decision (NOPD) is the final administrative step in the land health evaluation and permit renewal process that began on the Rock Pockets Allotment on February 14, 2001. In order to fulfill the requirements for "consultation, cooperation and coordination", copies of this NOPD have been sent to the Arizona State Land Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, any lien holder of record and all of the interested publics designated on this allotment.

BACKGROUND

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 provide for livestock grazing use of the public lands which have been classified as available for grazing. Grazing use must be consistent with good range management aimed at conservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources.

An assessment of this allotment was conducted in accordance with directions set forth in the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 98-91 and Arizona State Instruction Memorandum No. 99-012 for implementation of the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration.

The purpose of the Arizona Standards and Guidelines is to ensure the health of public rangelands. These standards help the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), rangeland users, and interested members of the public achieve a common understanding of acceptable resource conditions, and work together to implement that vision.

Arizona's Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration were developed by the BLM State Standards and Guidelines Team and the Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC), a state level council appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary of the Interior approved the Standards and Guidelines for Arizona in April 1997. The Decision Record, signed by the BLM State Director (April 1997) provides for full implementation of the Standards and Guidelines in all Arizona land use plans.

On January 23, 2001, the public was notified about the Rock Pockets Allotment evaluation and was invited to participate in the processes. Different individuals, groups, organizations and agencies were contacted from the general Arizona Strip District mailing lists to determine specific interest in the Rock Pockets Allotment and to solicit interest in the decision making process for term grazing permit renewal and Standards and Guidelines evaluation.

The permittee, RAC, Interdisciplinary Assessment Team, Rangeland Resource Team, and the interested public were invited to an issue scoping meeting for Rock Pockets Allotment on February 14, 2001 and a field visit on February 28, 2001. The Rock Pockets evaluation was completed on October 9, 2007. This fulfilled the purpose of determining whether the existing soil, water, and vegetative resources on public lands within the Rock Pockets Allotment met, were making significant progress toward meeting, or not meeting the standards. A thirty-day comment period on the report was afforded to the permittees, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona State Land Department, Interdisciplinary Assessment Team, Arizona Resource Advisory Council, Rangeland Resource Team and the designated interested public, which served as scoping for the permit renewal process. An environmental assessment (EA) for the renewal of the grazing permit for the Rock Pockets Allotment was completed in August 2015.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-AZ-A010-2013-0010-EA analyzes the potential effects of the proposed grazing permit renewal in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. This EA is considered a public document and is included along with this NOPD, or is available upon request from the Arizona Strip Field Office (please contact Kevin Schoppmann at 435-688-3220).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The BLM has conducted an environmental analysis (DOI-BLM-AZ-A010-2013-0010-EA) for the proposal to cancel the existing grazing permits and issue new grazing permits for the Rock Pockets Allotment for a period of ten years. Under the Proposed Action analyzed within this EA, there would be no changes in number of livestock or season of use from the current permits (see "Decision" section of this NOPD for a detailed description of the Proposed Action).

The proposed permit renewals have been reviewed through the Interdisciplinary Team process. After consideration of the environmental effects described in the EA and supporting documentation, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and the intensity of the proposal, as described below.

Context:

The proposed permit renewals are site-specific actions involving the Rock Pockets Allotment (consisting of approximately 19,870 acres of BLM-administered public land) that do not in and of themselves have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The grazing permits addressed in the EA would authorize 1,760 active AUMs as follows.

Table 1. Grazing Proposed Under Alternative A (Proposed Action) of the EA

Permittee Name[1]	Livestock			Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Public Land (acres)	% Federal Range
	No.	Kind	Season of Use				
Deone Baird	24	Cattle	12/1- 5/31	115	0	19,870	84%
Tyler Baird	68 2	Cattle Horses	10/1 – 9/30	703	0		
John Brinkerhoff	92 2	Cattle Horses	10/1 - 9/30	942	4		

It should be noted that this Finding of No Significant Impact/NOPD specifically addresses the permit for Deone Baird.

The grazing system designed for the allotment is a three-pasture deferred rotational system, which allows each pasture to be rested during the spring and/or summer growing seasons twice every three years, and allows for additional reduced grazing each summer (June through September) when livestock numbers are voluntarily reduced (depending on the year) and these cattle are moved to private lands.

Intensity:

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

[1] There are three permit holders on the Rock Pockets Allotment – each is allowed a different number of cattle during their allocated grazing period, but the livestock are grazed together as one herd.

The EA considered both the beneficial and adverse impacts of the Proposed Action. The beneficial effects of the Proposed Action include:

- Providing for a continued viable ranching operation for the livestock operator, and providing a degree of stability for the operator's livestock operation.

The adverse effects of the Proposed Action include:

- ***Minor impacts to vegetation caused by livestock grazing on palatable vegetation.*** Livestock can directly affect vegetation by reducing plant vigor, decreasing or eliminating desirable forage species, increasing soil instability and erosion, reducing water quantity and quality, and causing loss of, or injury to, individual plants from trampling, particularly near water developments. Long-term changes in vegetation may result if livestock use consistently exceeds established allocations, or drought or other environmental factors reduce range carrying capacity. Improper grazing practices (such as excessive utilization which removes vegetative cover) may lead to soil compaction, reduced infiltration rates, increased runoff and erosion, and declines in watershed condition. Grazing impacts on vegetation are mitigated by timing of use, adjustment of stocking rates, limiting utilization rates, and conformance with the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management. The current grazing system on this allotment has been developed to minimize adverse effects to vegetation by allowing each pasture to be rested during the spring and/or summer growing seasons twice every three years, and allows for additional reduced grazing when summer grazing would occur (June through September) because livestock numbers are reduced. The deferred rotation grazing system developed for this allotment provides for the physiological needs of the key species – the scheduled graze and rest periods benefit key species and other vegetation by increasing plant vigor, aiding in seed dissemination, and providing periodic rest during critical growing periods.
- ***Minor impacts to wildlife.*** Herbaceous vegetation provides forage and concealment cover for wildlife species, particularly during the spring breeding period when calving, fawning, nesting, and rearing of young occurs. Livestock grazing reduces the height and amount of herbaceous vegetation. The presence of livestock and the movement of livestock between areas of use could result in the direct disturbance or displacement of some wildlife from preferred habitats, nesting/birthing sites, or water sources. Both the disturbance and displacement of wildlife and the reduction of herbaceous forage and cover could limit the productivity and reproductive success of some species. However, the proposed livestock grazing would rotate season of use among the various pastures so that each pasture is grazed during a different season over the 3-year rotation cycle, which would help maintain vegetative condition, and therefore wildlife habitat components. In addition, displacement of wildlife due to the presence of livestock would only be temporary and would occur no more than once every three years due to the rotational grazing system in place.
- ***Minor impacts to soils.*** Impacts to soils from livestock grazing occur from trampling and vegetation removal, resulting in compaction and erosion. As described in the EA, the vast majority of the soils in this allotment are in fair to good condition and the natural vegetation is not detrimentally affected except for a few small areas. The largest of these,

about 30 acres of the Manikan stream terrace soil in the west pasture along the main road, is vegetated mostly by annuals. Moderate near surface compaction has reduced the infiltration rates, root space, available water holding capacity, and aeration and has increased runoff and droughtiness.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

The Proposed Action would not result in any effects to public health and safety. There are no public health or safety concerns associated with livestock grazing on the Rock Pockets Allotment.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the Rock Pockets Allotment. Livestock grazing has continued as an historic use of the public land in this allotment. The BLM would manage the allotment to ensure that livestock grazing would continue to be in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800.3). Cultural resources project files (AZ-BLM-010-2015-21) contain documentation of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Previous Class II or III intensive inventories have occurred within this allotment – there are twelve previous inventories completed in the Rock Pockets Allotment, and sites have been recorded. No known impacts to significant resources resulting from grazing have been identified. In addition, the BLM followed the Cultural Resource Compliance on Grazing Permit/Lease Renewals guidance contained within BLM Arizona's "Guidelines for Protecting Cultural Resources" handbook (Arizona H-8120, Appendix 12) in reviewing potential impacts to cultural resources on the Rock Pockets Allotment. The BLM used existing data, including site records and data from the sites in the allotment, to consider the potential for impacts to cultural resources across the allotment. This data was extrapolated from the existing site records and from on-the-ground observations provided by archaeologists, qualified archaeological volunteers, range specialists, and permittee(s). Since no impacts to significant and vulnerable cultural resources have been documented, no additional cultural resources inventory was recommended by the Arizona Strip Field Office archaeologist. In the event that significant archaeological resources (standing walled historic or prehistoric structures, rock art, or other sites potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places) are found to be adversely impacted by cattle, preventative and mitigation measures will be implemented including but not limited to fencing, recordation, data collection, and monitoring as is standard operating procedure under the National Historic Preservation Act. The renewal of the grazing permit, in the absence of any construction of new range improvements, therefore does not constitute a potential adverse effect to cultural resources.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Public input regarding the Proposed Action was solicited during the project planning process.

This process was initiated in 2001 with scoping meetings for the allotment land health evaluation. An EA for the renewal of the grazing permit for the Rock Pockets Allotment was completed in October 2008. A NOPD was issued on October 3, 2008, which was protested by Western Watersheds Project on October 10, 2008. No Final Decision was issued; due to the length of time since the original EA was prepared, the BLM decided to conduct a new analysis and develop a new EA. This EA reflects the re-analysis of the proposed grazing permit renewal.

The EA was posted on the BLM web page for review to those persons and groups listed on the Arizona Strip interested publics mailing list; a notice of public comment period letter was also sent out to those individuals to direct them to the web page address. No comments were received in response to this public comment period.

The protest received in 2008 generally centered on the following subjects:

- concerns over a lack of range of alternatives;
- concerns over authorizing the same level of grazing;
- impacts to wildlife due to competition between livestock and wildlife;
- impacts to vegetation resulting from promulgation of invasive/non-native weeds, and the proposed 50% utilization;
- impacts to soil from compaction and loss of soil crusts;
- concerns over the carrying capacity proposed to be maintained on the allotment; and
- concerns that the land health evaluation for the allotment is insufficient and inaccurate.

Based on the number and content of the comments received from the public, the effects on the quality of the human environment are not considered highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effects of livestock grazing on public lands in the semi-arid west are not unknown or uncertain. There are also no anticipated effects that involve unique or unknown risks – the effects of livestock grazing on the Arizona Strip (and elsewhere in the western U.S.) are well known and well documented. The Proposed Action is therefore not unique or unusual; no highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the Proposed Action.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future proposals for grazing permit renewals on this or other allotments will be analyzed on their own merits and implemented or not, independent of the current Proposed Action.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.

No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified for the Proposed Action. Any adverse impacts identified for the Proposed Action, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions will result in negligible impacts to natural and cultural resources.

The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible action in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the proposed permit renewal is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The BLM would manage the allotment to ensure that livestock grazing would continue to be in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800.3). Cultural resources project files (AZ-BLM-010-2015-21) contain documentation of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. As described in #3 above, previous Class II or III intensive inventories have occurred within this allotment – there are twelve previous inventories completed in the Rock Pockets Allotment, and sites have been recorded. No known impacts to significant resources resulting from grazing have been identified. In addition, the BLM followed the Cultural Resource Compliance on Grazing Permit/Lease Renewals guidance contained within BLM Arizona's "Guidelines for Protecting Cultural Resources" handbook (Arizona H-8120, Appendix 12) in reviewing potential impacts to cultural resources on the Rock Pockets Allotment. The BLM used existing data, including site records and data from the sites in the allotment, to consider the potential for impacts to cultural resources across the allotment. This data was extrapolated from the existing site records and from on-the-ground observations provided by archaeologists, qualified archaeological volunteers, range specialists, and permittees. Since no impacts to significant and vulnerable cultural resources have been documented, no additional cultural resources inventory was recommended by the Arizona Strip Field Office archaeologist. In the event that significant archaeological resources (standing walled historic or prehistoric structures, rock art, or other sites potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places) are found to be adversely impacted by cattle, preventative and mitigation measures will be implemented including but not limited to fencing, recordation, data collection, and monitoring as is standard operating procedure under the National Historic Preservation Act. The renewal of the grazing permit, in the absence of any construction of new range improvements, therefore does not constitute a potential adverse effect to cultural resources. Implementation of the Proposed Action is therefore not expected to adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed, endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.

There are no known populations of special status (i.e., threatened, endangered, candidate, or sensitive) plants found within the Rock Pockets Allotment; therefore, the proposed permit renewal would have no effect on special status plants.

The Rock Pockets Allotment is not within any critical habitat that has been designated or proposed under the Endangered Species Act. The California condor is the only known federally listed animal species that may occur within this allotment – condors may occasionally fly over or feed in this allotment at any time of year. California condors are federally listed as endangered and a population of these condors was reintroduced on the Arizona Strip in 1996. This population is designated as experimental non-essential under Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act.

Condors are strictly scavengers and prefer to eat large, dead animals such as mule deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, cattle, and horses. Condors range widely, easily covering over 100 miles in a day, and their current range includes the entire Arizona Strip. Although condors may either fly over or feed within the allotment, they have not been observed doing so. There is no evidence that rangeland health on this allotment is limiting or restricting condor population growth. Thus, no effect to this species is expected from implementation of the Proposed Action.

No other federally listed animal species or proposed species are known or suspected to occur in the area.

Based on the presence of suitable habitat and/or historical records of occurrence, the following BLM sensitive species may occur within the Rock Pockets Allotment, and may be affected by livestock grazing within this allotment: peregrine falcon, golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, and western burrowing owl. However, vegetation in the allotment is sufficient to provide food and shelter requirements for populations of prey species for these species. Managing the allotment to achieve desired plant community (DPC) objectives and implementation of the proposed utilization level would result in maintaining or improving the ecological condition of the allotment.

Disturbance to nest sites of these species from the livestock grazing could occur. However, impacts to these species are unlikely for the reasons described below.

- ***Peregrine falcon/golden eagle:*** Nesting sites for peregrine falcons or golden eagles would not be impacted by livestock within the allotment because these sites are located on ledges in cliff faces that are inaccessible to livestock. Disturbance to peregrine falcon and golden eagle nest sites is unlikely given the remote and inaccessible locations these species choose for nesting.
- ***Ferruginous hawk:*** Nesting sites and habitat for ferruginous hawk prey species have the

potential to be impacted by livestock grazing within the allotment. Isolated nest trees used by this species could be impacted through rubbing of the trunk or by damaging the root system from congregations of cattle seeking shade. Habitat for prey species, such as black-tailed jackrabbits, could be adversely impacted if overutilization occurs. However, the effects of moderate grazing (such as would occur under the Proposed Action) can be negligible to slightly beneficial for many prey species. Ferruginous hawks are sensitive to disturbance near the nest site. However, no nesting has been documented in this allotment so impacts to nesting are unlikely and would not lead to a trend toward listing.

- ***Western burrowing owl:*** Nesting burrows for burrowing owls could potentially be impacted by livestock within the allotment through trampling. However, burrowing owls prefer open country with sparse vegetation and can do well in moderately to heavily grazed areas. Occupied burrows in the allotment frequently have cows nearby during monitoring visits. Prey species are numerous in the allotment and include small mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. Disturbance to nest sites from livestock management operations may occur but this species is known to tolerate moderate levels of disturbance. Implementation of the Proposed Action is not likely to impact burrowing owl habitat or nesting success in the allotment.

Based on the analysis in the EA, no significant impacts or adverse effects would occur to the aforementioned species or their habitat (EA Chapter 4).

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.

The Proposed Action does not violate any federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process and expressed no concerns about this matter.

DECISION

After having considered the analysis contained within EA No. DOI-BLM-AZ-A010-2013-0010-EA, it is my proposed decision that the Deone Baird term grazing permit renewal analyzed within the subject EA be approved.

The specific decision is outlined as follows:

Cancel the existing grazing permit and issue a new grazing permit for the Rock Pockets Allotment for a period of ten years. There is no proposed change in number of livestock or season of use. Livestock grazing will occur during the season of use, and with the number of Animal Unit Months (AUMs)[2] limited to the current active preference as shown in Table 2.

[2] An AUM, or Animal Unit Month, is a unit of measurement indicating how much forage is eaten by a cow/calf pair in one month.

Table 2. Grazing for Deone Baird Term Permit

Permittee Name	Livestock			Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Public Land (acres)	% Federal Range
	No.	Kind	Season of Use				
Deone Baird	24	Cattle	12/1- 5/31	115	0	19,870	84%

Allowable use on key forage species on the allotment (which implements a rotational grazing system) will be no more than 50% utilization of current year's production removed through grazing or other loss. (Key forage species for the Rock Pockets Allotment are listed in Section 3.3.2 of the EA.) The BLM will assess resource conditions through field inspections and determine, in consultation with the permittee, whether management changes (e.g., changes in livestock numbers, adjustment of move date, or other changes or use within the identified parameters) may be implemented prior to reaching maximum utilization. Move dates (i.e., removal of livestock from a pasture) may be adjusted if monitoring indicates maximum utilization has been reached, or due to unusual climatic conditions, fire, flood, or other acts of nature. If maximum utilization is reached on key species/areas in the allotment before a scheduled move date, the use of salt, herding, or other management options may be used to distribute livestock away from an area where maximum utilization has been reached, or livestock may be removed from the pasture (after consultation with the permittee), as deemed necessary by the BLM.

The grazing system designed for the Rock Pockets Allotment is a three pasture deferred rotational system (see Chapter 3 of the EA for a detailed description of the grazing system for this allotment).

The allotment will be managed to achieve the following DPC objectives:

Key Area #1, Yellowstone Pasture (Sandy Loam Upland 7-11" p.z.)
- Maintain the perennial grass CBW between 35-45%.
- Maintain the shrub/browse CBW between 10-30%.
- Maintain the forb composition by weight (CBW) between 1-10%.

Key Area #2, Horse Knoll Pasture (Clay Loam Upland 7-11" p.z.)
- Maintain the perennial grass CBW between 5-25%.
- Maintain the shrub/browse CBW between 20-45%.
- Maintain the forb CBW between 1-5%.

Key Area #3, Rock Pockets Pasture (Gyp. Upland 7-11" p.z.)
- Maintain the perennial grass CBW between 20-10%.
- Maintain the shrub/browse CBW between 15-35%.
- Maintain the forb CBW between 1-10%.

This decision includes adaptive management, which provides a menu of management options that may be needed to adjust management decisions and actions to meet desired conditions as determined through monitoring. BLM resource specialists will periodically monitor the

allotment over the 10-year term of the grazing permit to ensure that the fundamentals or conditions of rangeland health are being met, in accordance with 43 CFR 4180. If monitoring indicates that desired conditions are not being achieved and current livestock grazing practices are causing non-attainment of resource objectives, livestock grazing management of the allotment will be modified in cooperation with the permittee(s). Adaptive management allows the BLM to adjust the timing, intensity, frequency and duration of grazing; the grazing management system; and livestock numbers temporarily or on a more long-term basis, as deemed necessary. An example of a situation that could call for adaptive management adjustments is drought conditions. If the permittee disagrees with the BLM's assessment of the resource conditions or the necessary modifications, the BLM may nevertheless issue a Full Force and Effect Grazing Decision to protect resources.

Terms and Conditions of Grazing Permit

- The permittee must submit the actual use report within 15 days after her billing year ends. Livestock may be moved 15 days before or after scheduled move dates.

- Use of nutritional livestock supplements is allowed, including protein, minerals and salt. However, any supplements used must be dispersed at a minimum of ¼ mile from any known water sources, and cultural or any other sensitive sites. Any hay or other feed used in administering the livestock operation must be certified weed-free.

- If any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Public Law 101-601; 104 Stat. 3048; 25 U.S. Code 3001) are discovered in connection with allotment operations under the grazing permit, the permittee will be required to protect the immediate area of the discovery and immediately notify the BLM authorized officer or her authorized representative.

AUTHORITY

The authority for this decision is contained in Section 315b of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, which addresses issuing grazing permits on public lands.

PLAN CONFORMANCE

Conformance with Land Use Plan

The Proposed Action described in Chapter 2 of the EA has been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the *Arizona Strip Field Office Resource Management Plan* (RMP), approved on January 29, 2008. The Proposed Action is consistent with the following decisions contained within this plan.

The following decisions are from Table 2.11 in the RMP regarding management of livestock grazing:

- **DFC-GM-01:** Healthy, sustainable rangeland ecosystems will be maintained or improved to meet Arizona's Standards for Rangeland Health (1997), and produce a wide range of public values such as wildlife habitat, livestock forage, recreation opportunities, clean water, and functional watersheds.
- **DFC-GM-02:** Livestock use and associated management practices will be conducted in a manner consistent with other resource needs and objectives to ensure that the health of rangeland resources is preserved or improved so that they are productive for all rangeland values. Where needed, public rangeland ecosystems will be improved to meet objectives.
- **LA-GM-01:** All allotments will continue to be classified as available for grazing by livestock under the principle of multiple use and sustained yield, except where specifically noted.[3]
- **MA-GM-02:** Implementing the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health will continue on all grazing allotments in accordance with established schedules and congressional requirements. The Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management will apply to all livestock grazing activities. These guidelines address management practices at the grazing AMP-level and are intended to maintain desirable conditions or improve undesirable rangeland conditions within reasonable time frames.
- **MA-GM-03:** The interdisciplinary allotment evaluation process will continue to be used to provide specific guidance and actions for managing livestock grazing. Existing AMPs and other activity plans will be consistent with achieving the DFCs and standards for rangeland health. They will contain the site-specific management objectives, as well as actions, methods, tools, and appropriate monitoring protocols.
- **MA-GM-04:** Existing management practices and levels of use on grazing allotments will be reviewed and evaluated on a priority basis to determine if they meet or are making progress toward meeting the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health. Appropriate and timely actions will be implemented to deal with those areas not meeting the standards.
- **MA-GM-05:** The allotment management categorization process will continue to be used to define the level of management needed to properly administer livestock grazing according to management needs, resource conflicts, potential for improvement, and BLM funding/staffing constraints. The allotment categories are Custodial, managed custodially to protect resource conditions and values; Maintain, managed to maintain current satisfactory resource conditions and are actively managed to ensure that the condition of resource values do not decline; and Improve, actively managed to improve unsatisfactory resource conditions.
- **MA-GM-07:** Allowable use on key forage species is 50% on allotments with rotational grazing systems, except in tortoise habitat. On allotments in desert tortoise habitat or being less intensively managed, then utilization is set at 45%[4].
- **MA-GM-08:** Any hay or other feed used in administering the livestock operation will be certified weed-free.

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[3] No restrictions are associated with the Rock Pockets Allotment.

[4] The Rock Pockets Allotment is managed under a rotational grazing system, so maximum utilization is set at 50%.

The allotment analyzed in this EA is classified as available for grazing under the RMP, with no seasonal restrictions. The Proposed Action meets these land use plan decisions. It has also been determined that the Proposed Action does not conflict with other decisions throughout the RMP.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The EA considered four alternatives:

- ***Alternative A*** – Proposed Action (cancel existing grazing permit and issue new 10-year term permit with the same number of livestock and season of use as the existing permit);
- ***Alternative B*** – Issue new 10-year permit with reduced grazing (based on actual use over the period of 2006-2014);
- ***Alternative C*** – Issue new 10-year permit with increased grazing (based on potential stocking level analysis); and
- ***Alternative D*** – No Grazing.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The decision to authorize this grazing permit renewal has been made in consideration of the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. This decision has been made after considering impacts to resources, such as vegetation, wildlife, special status species, cultural resources, and soils, while providing opportunities for livestock grazing that meets management objectives, including the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management and the Arizona Strip Field Office RMP. Impacts to livestock grazing, vegetation, wildlife, and soils were analyzed in detail in the EA.

The NEPA documentation (DOI-BLM-AZ-A010-2013-0010-EA) analyzes the Proposed Action and alternatives, which constitutes the BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA, and procedural requirements as provided in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations. This is demonstrated by the background information set forth below:

- The EA, DOI-BLM-AZ-A010-2011-0022-EA, analyzed the Proposed Action as well as alternatives to the Proposed Action. This EA went through an interdisciplinary review process. The EA is a public document, and is available upon request.

- As documented in the EA analysis of the allotment's monitoring data and supporting documentation in the land health evaluation report, resource conditions on the allotment meet all applicable standards for rangeland health. The NEPA analysis determined that implementing the Proposed Action will allow the allotment to continue meeting all applicable standards for rangeland health.

Based upon the above information, I have determined that adjustments to active use and management practices are currently not necessary for the allotment to continue meeting the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration and other land use plan multiple use objectives.

APPEAL

Any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other affected interests may protest this proposed decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.2 in person or in writing to the authorized officer, Lorraine M. Christian, at 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah, 84790 within 15 days after receipt of such decision. The protest should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) as to why the proposed decision is in error.

In the absence of a protest, the proposed decision shall constitute my final decision without further notice, in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.3(a).

In accordance with 43 CFR 4.470, 4160.3(c), and 4160.4, any person whose interest is adversely affected by a final decision of the authorized officer may appeal the decision for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge. Pursuant to 43 CFR 4.471 and 4160.3(c), an appellant also may petition for stay of the final BLM grazing decision pending final determination on appeal by filing a petition for stay along with the appeal. To do so the appeal and petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officers, as noted above, within 30 days after the receipt of the decision as provided in 43 CFR 4160.3(a). In compliance with 43 CFR 4.470, the appeal must state clearly and concisely the reasons why the appellant thinks the BLM grazing decision is wrong.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 4.471(c), a petition for a stay, if filed, must 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 the stay.

43 CFR 4.471(d) provides that the appellant requesting a stay bears the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

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

Sincerely,

Lorraine M. Christian
Field Manager
Arizona Strip Field Office

Sept. 21, 2015
Date