

Chapter 1 - Purpose of and Need for Action

The Wallowa-Valley District Ranger is proposing to authorize livestock grazing on eleven livestock allotments within the 95,555-acre Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area. The allotment names are Al-Cunningham, Cougar Creek, Crow Creek, Davis Creek, Dobbins, Elk Mountain, Fine, Hunting Camp/Table Mountain, Joseph Creek, and Swamp Creek. Refer to Figure 1 for a vicinity map.

The chapter begins with an explanation of the purpose and need for action and a statement of the proposed action developed to meet that purpose and need. The chapter also addresses the decision framework, outlines applicable management direction, and identifies the analysis area and location of the analysis file. The chapter closes by listing the issues identified during scoping and by summarizing the scoping process.

Purpose of and Need for Action

The Wallowa-Valley District Ranger has identified a purpose and need for forage allocation for commercial livestock grazing. The purpose and need for action is based on the premise that livestock forage production is to be offered where forage is in excess to basic plant and soil needs, wildlife forage is available, and other specific resource conditions are achieved or maintained (Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Page 4-3). This plan, referred to as the Forest Plan, recognizes that the local livestock industry desires to maintain and increase National Forest grazing which coincides with Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Act (RPA) projections of increases in National population and total demand for beef (Forest Plan, Page 2-10). However, the Forest Plan also notes the complications that are involved regarding livestock effects on streamside damage to soil, vegetation and water quality, and the cost of improvements needed to alleviate these effects (Page 2-10).

The purpose and need is represented by the difference between the area's desired and existing conditions with respect to the management direction for the area.

Desired Condition

Basic rangeland, wildlife, and resource conditions are defined by the Forest Plan specific to each Management Area. The Joseph Creek Rangeland Planning Area contains Forest Plan allocations of Timber Emphasis (Management Area 1), Timber/Big Game Emphasis (Management Area 3), Wild and Scenic Rivers (Management Area 7), Proposed Research Natural Areas (Management Area 12), and Old Growth Emphasis (Management Area 15). Refer to Figure 1 for the location of these management areas. Desired range, wildlife, and resource conditions for each management area are described below.

For Management Areas 1 and 3, desired conditions are prescribed by the Forest Plan as ‘satisfactory’ range conditions. In ecological terms, satisfactory rangelands are those in fair to good condition with stable or upward trend. Management Area 3 distinguishes winter range for big game, which adds provisions that adequate forage be available for wintering big game. Desired riparian vegetation conditions within these management areas are to be established by setting measurable objectives for key parameters such as stream surface shade, streambank stability, and shrub cover (Forest Plan, Page 4-54). Regional Forester Amendment #3, referred to as PacFish, established streambank stability standards of at least 80 percent. Desired conditions for Swamp Creek are to reach shrub density and diversity conditions on the upper meadow section similar to the lower canyon section.

For Management Area 7, desired rangeland conditions are prescribed by the Forest Plan as those needed to protect or enhance the Outstandingly Remarkable Values for the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River. The Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (Page 6) gives the following description for rangeland desired conditions.

“The desired future condition for this resource will consist of sustained production of both palatable and non-palatable species for grazing by livestock and dependent wildlife. The areas will remain ecologically diverse and provide excellent winter browse for big game species. The variety of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees will be more representative of the natural community at the time of Euro-American settlement. On the grasslands, native bunchgrass communities will predominate, browse species such as ocean spray, snowberry, ninebark, and serviceberry will predominate. Riparian habitat will improve and approximate the natural potential of each site and contain dense stands of willow with a fair component of black cottonwood and aspen. Recreational/grazing conflicts and livestock presence in riparian zone, however few, will be reduced. Recreationists, from late fall to spring, will encounter evidence of cattle on the trails, and the physical presence of livestock, but this will be less than in the past.”

For Management Area 12, desired conditions are prescribed by the Forest Plan as those needed to preserve options for future establishment of Research Natural Areas (RNA). The potential Horse Pasture Ridge RNA and the Haystack Rock RNA comprise the area allocated to Management Area 12 within the JCRAA. Both areas were identified as potential RNAs for their representation of native bunchgrass communities. In ecological terms, a desired condition for the potential RNAs is for a condition of good to excellent in a static or upward trend.

For Management Area 15, desired conditions are not addressed, as rangeland presence in designated old growth stands is considered incidental and transitory due to competition with the conifer overstory.

Existing Condition

Existing conditions can be described in the context of two scenarios: as if no livestock grazing occurred, or if the current grazing regime continued. Because the existing range

condition developed from a grazing history that predates the National Environmental Policy Act and in some cases pre-dates establishment of the National Forest, existing conditions are described here under the scenario of current grazing as influenced by historical grazing. Further information regarding range conditions is provided in Chapter 3 of this analysis.

Range conditions were evaluated for each of the 65 pastures of the Joseph Creek Rangeland Planning Area. All except for 5 pastures were found to have satisfactory range condition. A description of range conditions by Management Area follows.

For pastures primarily within Management Area 1, range conditions are satisfactory with the exception of the South Crow, Doe Gulch, Bennett, and Upper Swamp Pastures.

The South Crow and Doe Gulch Pastures of the Crow Creek Allotment are generally in unsatisfactory range condition. This condition is a result of historical management practices that included overstocking and season-long grazing pressure. Some of this area will remain in this condition regardless of grazing management due to natural soil characteristics and the conversion of plant communities from native perennials to mostly annual plant species. These pastures also contain known populations of Spalding's catchfly, a federally listed plant species.

The Bennett and Upper Swamp Pastures of the Swamp Creek Allotment have areas of unsatisfactory riparian vegetation condition. Swamp Creek has been altered through a history of railroad logging, homesteading, road construction, and grazing. The 8.5-mile segment referred to as the Meadow Segment was recently acquired through a land exchange. In this segment, shrub species diversity and quantity are lacking and some streambank reaches are unstable. Much of the herbaceous plants include non-native seeded grasses such as timothy, orchard, and brome. Although beaver would normally be a part of such a stream system, beaver have been trapped out, and the food source is not available to support their reintroduction. The stream system supports steelhead, and the meadow supports a variety of wildlife.

Range conditions for pastures primarily within Management Area 3 are satisfactory with the exception of the Sumac Pasture of the Cougar Creek Allotment. Condition and Trend monitoring for this pasture indicates that areas are in unsatisfactory condition as indicated by a substantial drop in native perennial grasses such as bluebunch wheatgrass and Sandberg's bluegrass.

Management Area 3 emphasizes big-game winter range. Under the current grazing system, big-game winter range has been adequate, according to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists. Current Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer populations are below Management Objectives, however. The decline in big-game populations can be attributed to factors such as open road densities, lack of hiding cover, hunting pressure, and predation. If deer and elk populations were to increase, additional forage may be needed than currently available at the end of the livestock grazing period.

For areas within Management Area 7, range conditions in the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor are satisfactory with isolated small areas of unsatisfactory range condition. The unsatisfactory condition is evident where annual non-native plant species

such as cheat grass and introduced grass species exist as a relic of homesteading in this area before establishment of the National Forest. Riparian shrubs are present along Joseph Creek and its tributaries at a density and species diversity that would occur naturally. This condition is assumed to occur when utilization of shrubs by livestock and big game is less than 20 percent.

For areas within Management Area 12, range conditions in the proposed Research Natural Areas are in a good to excellent ecological condition, and a static to upward trend.

For areas within Management Area 15, the existing range condition is mixed because the conifer overstory generally precludes sustainable rangeland.

Refer to Chapter 3, Rangeland Resources, for further description of existing range conditions.

Proposed Action (Alternative 2)

The Wallowa Valley District Ranger proposes to authorize continued grazing on eleven cattle allotments within the Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area. The allotment management plans that emerge from this analysis would be implemented in Spring 2005. The proposed action is represented by Alternative 2 in Chapter 2. Refer to Pages 18-30 for a description of the proposed action.

Decision Framework

The decision framework refers to the nature of the decision that will be made by the Wallowa Valley District Ranger based on the analysis contained in this document and the comments submitted during the public review and comment period for this Environmental Impact Statement. The decision framework does not describe the actual content of the District Ranger's pending decision.

At the conclusion of the public review and comment period, the Wallowa Valley District Ranger will decide whether to implement management of the Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area as proposed, to implement management in a modified fashion, or not to implement management at all. The District Ranger's decision will also determine if the project might require amendment of the Forest Plan. Implementation of the decision is anticipated in Spring of 2005.

The Record of Decision will accompany the Final Environmental Impact Statement, and it will identify the selected alternative. Selection of alternatives will be based on the analysis contained in the FEIS, including factors such as: how the alternatives meet the purpose of and need for action, respond to the key issues, consider the environmental effects, comply with the Forest Plan, and respond to public comments.

Analysis Area

The Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area is located north of Enterprise, Oregon, within the Wallowa Valley Ranger District of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The JCRAA encompasses approximately 95,555 acres of National Forest and interspersed private land. The range analysis area contains portions of the Upper Joseph and Lower Joseph Creek Watersheds and includes the following major tributaries: Crow Creek, Elk Creek, Davis Creek, and Swamp Creek. Refer to Figure 1 for a vicinity map. The analysis area is currently managed under 11 livestock grazing allotments which are administered under 13 permits. The area of each allotment is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Allotment Acreages

Allotment	NFS Acres	Private Land Acres
Al-Cunningham	1,630	395
Cougar Creek	18,350	0
Crow Creek	1,570	395
Davis Creek	5,636	4,841
Fine	1,467	48
Hunting Camp	10,229	0
Swamp Creek	33,047	1,444
Table Mountain	14,591	478
Joseph Creek	1,002	569
Dobbins	255	1,360
Elk Mountain	207	355

Management Direction

Management direction is derived from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), as amended which incorporates PacFish, InFish, and the Wallowa-Whitman Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan.

Management Areas

Management Areas prescribed by the Forest Plan are listed in Table 1 by allotment. Figure 1 displays a map of the management areas (MA) within the JCRAA. A summary of the resource objectives behind each management area follows.

Table 2 - Management Area Acres by Allotment

Allotment	MA 1 Acres	MA 1W Acres	MA 3 Acres	MA 7 Acres	MA 12/12-7 Acres	MA 15 Acres	MA 15-7 Acres
Al-Cunningham	114		1,376			139	
Cougar Creek	11,984		5,180			417	
Crow Creek	331	804	130			11	
Davis Creek	5,397		5			156	
Dobbins	102	154					
Elk Mountain	207						
Fine	1,034		342			138	
Hunting Camp/ Table Mountain	8,619		12,255	1,595	705/55	1,666	
Joseph Creek	150		453	375		84	
Swamp Creek	15,605	1,098	15,312	340		640	10
Total acres	43,543	2056	35,053	2310	760	3284	10
Percent of analysis area	50	2	40	3	1	4	Less than 0.1

MA1/1W - Management emphasizes wood fiber production on suitable time lands while providing relatively high levels of forage and recreational opportunities. Areas designated as 1W describe where winter range overlaps with MA1.

MA3 - This management area is identified as big game winter range. Management is similar to MA1, but timber management is designed to provide near-optimum cover and forage conditions.

MA7 - Management is intended to preserve the special values of those rivers or river segments (river plus associated corridor) which are part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

MA12/12-7 - These areas are designated as Research Natural Areas and are established to preserve examples of all significant ecosystems to serve as comparison for those influenced by human activities. Research Natural Areas within the Wild and Scenic river corridor are 12-7.

MA15/15-7 – These areas are intended to maintain habitat diversity, preserve aesthetic values, and to provide old-growth habitat for wildlife. MA 15-7 displays areas where old growth managed habitat occurs within the Wild and Scenic river corridor.

Standards and Guidelines

Forest Plan standards and guidelines (as amended) describe the management direction for livestock management within the JCRAA.

- 1) Forage production in excess to that needed for the health of the plant and soil resources will be made available for harvest by wildlife and domestic livestock within the forage and browse utilization standards and guidelines from the Forest Plan (Pages. 4-51 and 52).

- 2) Manage riparian areas so as to avoid measurably increasing water temperatures on Class I streams. On Class II streams, management will limit temperature increases to the criteria in State standards (Page 4-23).
- 3) Mitigate negative impacts causing reduction in water quality to return water quality to previous levels in as short a time as possible (Page 4-23).
- 4) Enhance streambank vegetation where it can be effective in improving channel stability or fish habitat (Page 4-23).
- 5) Give areas in which water quality or channel stability are being adversely impacted high priority for treatment to minimize the effects of the impact or to correct the impacting activity (Page 4-23).
- 6) Habitats will be protected and managed for the perpetuation and recovery of Proposed, Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive species (Page 4-30).
- 7) Management will strive for maintenance of native and desirable introduced or historical plant and animal species, and will provide for all seral stages in abundance and distribution (Page 4-1).
- 8) Habitat will be provided for viable populations of existing native and desirable non-native vertebrate wildlife species (Page 4-2).
- 9) Manage for timber and grazing so as to provide protection of tree plantations through improvements in livestock management (Page 4-58).
- 10) All environmental analyses conducted under NEPA for ground- disturbing activities will consider noxious weed management (Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, Decision Notice, Page.2).
- 11) All projects incorporate noxious weed prevention strategies (Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, Appendix D, Page 79).
- 12) GM-1 Modify grazing practices (e.g.) accessibility of riparian areas to livestock, length of grazing season, stocking levels, timing of grazing, etc.) that retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives (PacFish, Appendix C).
- 13) GM-2 Locate new livestock handling and/or management facilities outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. For existing livestock handling facilities inside the Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, assure that facilities do not prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives. Relocate or close facilities where these objectives cannot be met (PacFish, Appendix C).
- 14) GM-3 Limit livestock trailing, bedding, watering, salting, loading, and other handling efforts to those areas and times that will not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish (PacFish, Appendix C).

Analysis File

The analysis file that supports this Environmental Impact Statement is available at the Wallowa Valley Ranger District in Enterprise, Oregon.

Scoping

Public scoping for the JCRAA was initiated in January 1999 with the project's inclusion on the January Schedule of Proposed Actions mailed from the Wallowa Mountains Office in Enterprise, Oregon. Also in January 1999, a project information letter was mailed to over 100 individuals, organizations, and agencies for their comment. These individuals and organizations included grazing permittees, State and Federal resource management agencies, and other special interest organizations. A Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on February 18, 1999.

Contacts were made with employees of the Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla. An office meeting was held in October 2002 with fisheries/environmental policy representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe. A field review was conducted with fisheries/environmental policy employees from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla in October 2002.

The permittees holding grazing permits on the allotments analyzed in this EIS were included throughout the process. The permittees provided input for alternatives and site-specific development proposals for their respective allotments.

Coordination with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife was conducted for this proposal through two September 2003 meetings and several telephone conversations.

These scoping efforts generated responses from 19 agencies, organizations, tribes, or individuals. Responses are documented in 15 letters, as well as several e-mails, telephone conversation records, and meeting notes.

To help clarify the concerns, follow-up telephone conversations, meetings, and e-mails were made between the Interdisciplinary Team and the commenters. Much of the correspondence focused on what information should be provided in the EIS.

Some respondents expressed concerns about how grazing management might affect specially designated areas, such as the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River, and potential Research Natural Areas. Key Issues 1, 2, and 3 were developed to respond to these concerns. Concerns about water quality and fisheries habitat were expressed, particularly in Swamp Creek. Key Issue 2 responds to those concerns. Range health and potential conflicts between livestock management and listed plant species were mentioned by some respondents. Key Issue 4 was developed to respond to those concerns. Several livestock

grazing permittees expressed concerns about how increasing constraints on their operations sometimes inhibit their ability to manage the range resource effectively. Key Issue 5 was developed to address these concerns. Key Issue 5 also addresses concerns raised by the Nez Perce Tribe about flexibility in grazing systems if the tribe should assert treaty rights related to pasturing of horses within these allotments. Consultation with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists about big-game use of the analysis area resulted in few concerns with the current grazing program. However, the biologists emphasized the need to maintain big-game winter range in key locations, even in drought years. Key Issue 6 was developed to address this concern. Several respondents stressed the need to design grazing systems that provide for long-term rangeland health. Key Issue 7 was developed to address this concern.

Issues

Issues that could best be addressed by forming an alternative or introducing mitigation or monitoring were identified and categorized as 'Key Issues'. An issue tracking sheet in Appendix B lists other issues considered by the team and either addressed in the analysis or considered outside the scope of this analysis. The following seven key issues were developed from comments on the proposed action.

Issue 1

Key Issue - Authorizing livestock grazing within the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River may degrade water quality to the point that the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of 'Fish and Water Quality' and 'Wildlife' are neither protected nor enhanced.

Management of the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor is prescribed by the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, which was amended into the Forest Plan in 1994. The corridor is approximately 1/2- mile in width and is designated Management Area 7. This area includes the Wilder and Joseph Breaks pastures of the Table Mountain Allotment, the Joseph Creek Pasture of the Joseph Creek Allotment, and the Buck Pasture of the Swamp Creek Allotment. Refer to the area designated as Management Area 7 on Figure 1 for a map of the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) for Joseph Creek include 'Fish and Water Quality' and 'Wildlife'.

Resource objectives established by the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan state that livestock grazing will be managed so that the area remains ecologically diverse and provides excellent winter browse for big game species. The variety of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees will be more representative of the natural community at the time of Euro-American settlement. On the grasslands, native bunchgrass communities will predominate, browse species such as ocean spray, snowberry, ninebark, and serviceberry will predominate. Riparian habitat will improve and approximate the natural potential of each site and contain dense stands of willow with a fair component of black cottonwood and aspen.

The plan establishes specific parameters for maintaining the water quality and fisheries ORV. Streambank stability will be at least 90 percent. Maximum summer stream temperatures will be 68 degrees Fahrenheit or at least on a decreasing trend. Cobble embeddedness (a measure of sediment accumulation) will be less than 15 percent. Stream shade will be 20 to 30 percent in the downstream segment, and 25 to 35 percent in the upstream segment.

Measures for evaluating this issue are

- Percent streambank stability in 10 years
- Increases in maximum summer water temperature in 10 years
- Increases in percent cobble embeddedness in 10 years
- Decreases in percent stream shade in 10 years
- Allowable shrub utilization in the Wild and Scenic River Corridor
- Allowable forage utilization in the Wild and Scenic River Corridor

Issue 2

Key Issue - Authorizing livestock grazing along Swamp Creek may degrade water quality before it reaches the Wild and Scenic River so that the Outstandingly Remarkable Value of 'Fish and Water Quality' is neither protected nor enhanced.

While only the lower 0.5 miles of Swamp Creek are within the Wild and Scenic River corridor, Swamp Creek is a major tributary to Joseph Creek and a contributor to the water quality of Joseph Creek. The lower 8.5-mile segment of Swamp Creek is a V-shaped valley with interspersed meadows. This segment is fenced and is managed as a riparian pasture. Riparian vegetation is intact and plays the proper role in providing streambank stability and supporting beaver populations. It presents an example of desired conditions for Swamp Creek.

However, continuing upstream, Swamp Creek turns into a flat alluvial valley. This 8.7-mile segment is referred to as the Meadow Segment. Until the late 1990s, most of this segment and its adjoining floodplain was in private ownership, and grazing management was not waived to the Forest Service. The segment displays a lack of shrub species diversity and quantity, resulting in some segments of streambank instability.

The Swamp Creek Restoration project was initiated in 1999 to improve watershed condition and fisheries habitat in the Meadow Segment through fencing, planting of hardwoods, upland water source development, hardening of water gaps, and road maintenance. The desired condition would generally double the shrub presence and double the shrub species diversity, while increasing streambank stability to 95 percent. The current shrub component along Swamp Creek is sporadic and is predominately alder with some dogwood, hawthorn, willow, and water birch. Current streambank stability is estimated at less than 80 percent in this segment, although the stability has increased since 1999. The desired condition would include more shrubs and a wider variety of species, including better representation of species other than alder. Species appropriate for this area would be

mountain maple, hawthorn, aspen, willow, water birch, mountain snowberry, service berry, black elderberry, black cottonwood, and mountain ash.

This issue arises from the influence that livestock grazing will have on the rate of recovery achieved by the Swamp Creek Restoration project.

Measures for evaluating this issue are

- Allowable shrub utilization in the Meadow Segment of Swamp Creek
- Anticipated streambank stability along the meadow section of Swamp Creek in five to ten years

Issue 3

Key Issue - Authorizing livestock grazing as proposed may not preserve options for establishing Research Natural Areas for the Haystack Rock and Horse Pasture Ridge potential Research Natural Areas.

The potential Haystack Rock and Horse Pasture Ridge Research Natural Areas were proposed for inclusion in the Research Natural Area system in 1990 by the Forest Plan. These areas are designated Management Area 12 as shown on Figure 1 and are both in the Table Mountain Allotment. The Haystack Rock area occurs in the Wilder and Joseph Breaks Pastures and the Horse Pasture Ridge Area occurs in the Horse Pasture Ridge Pasture. Both areas were identified as potential RNAs for their representation of native bunchgrass communities. These areas have received light livestock use in the past and continue to have only incidental use. The Horse Pasture Ridge potential RNA has some degraded range conditions at the south end due to an area where salt was traditionally placed, but is otherwise in good to excellent ecological condition. The Haystack Rock area is in good to excellent condition, although a portion of the potential RNA is shown on a privately owned parcel. The desired conditions for potential RNAs are to preserve the values for which the area was identified so that future establishment is not precluded. Part of the establishment process is to delineate a boundary that includes the best representative portion of the desired plant communities.

Measures for evaluating this issue are

- Area within the Haystack Rock potential RNA where ecological conditions are maintained as good or excellent
- Area within the Horse Pasture Ridge potential RNA where ecological conditions are maintained as good or excellent

Issue 4

Key Issue - Authorizing livestock grazing within the Tommy's Ridge and Fire Ridge areas as proposed may not adequately protect the threatened plant, Spalding's catchfly, from livestock

trampling and habitat alteration. It may also not adequately protect unknown Spalding's catchfly occurrences in unsurveyed portions of the analysis area.

Known occurrences of Spalding's catchfly occur in the vicinity of Tommy's Ridge and Fire Ridge. Refer to Figure 4 in Chapter 3. Tommy's Ridge encompasses the area between Crow Creek and the National Forest boundary to the east. This area is currently managed within the North Crow, South Crow, and Doe Gulch Pastures of the Crow Creek Allotment. Fire Ridge encompasses the ridgeline west of Crow Creek. It is currently managed within the Dorrance and Catchfly Pastures of the Swamp Creek Allotment. The populations on Tommy's Ridge are at risk to impacts from livestock because the range condition is poor (a holdover from historical grazing practices) and a water development in the Doe Gulch Pasture attracts livestock toward a known population. Continuation of the current grazing strategy may not adequately protect this plant or its surrounding potential habitat on Tommy's Ridge. The populations on Fire Ridge, however are in pastures demonstrating light livestock use and satisfactory range conditions that are in good ecological condition. Continuation of the current grazing strategy would continue to protect this plant and its surrounding potential habitat on Fire Ridge.

Approximately 30 percent of the analysis area has been surveyed for the presence of rare plants, although those survey locations do not necessarily coincide with the areas having highest potential for Spalding's catchfly. Potential habitat for Spalding's catchfly has been determined through a model created for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest under contract with the Oregon Natural Heritage Program. Modeled habitat occurs at varying probabilities throughout the analysis area (refer to maps in the analysis file). Spalding's catchfly risk areas within the JCRAA were delineated that have limited survey, have the highest probability for containing catchfly habitat as shown by the model and as tempered by local knowledge of the analysis area, and are grazed during periods when catchfly is at risk to livestock damage. Refer to Figure 4 for a map of these risk areas. A total of 10,662 acres have been identified as risk areas, and 3032 of those acres will be surveyed in the summer of 2004 for the presence of Spalding's catchfly.

The measure for evaluating this issue is

- Spalding's catchfly risk areas subjected to livestock grazing impacts
- Acres of risk areas that would be inventoried for the presence of Spalding's catchfly within 3 to 6 years

Issue 5

Key Issue - Authorizing livestock grazing as proposed throughout the Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area may not be adaptive enough to allow a timely or effective response to changing conditions.

Because grazing permits are issued for a 10-year period, resource and climatic conditions, agency policy, and legal requirements can change over the permit period. Allotment management plans that strictly define grazing management schedules and livestock use are not effective in managing these changes over time. The proposed action (current

management) prescribes specific seasons of use, duration of grazing, and stocking levels for each pasture. While these specifications may be the best management system for that allotment at this time, changes in circumstances may unnecessarily limit the agency's ability to respond to future issues.

Another potential change in grazing results from tribal treaty rights related to pasturing of horses. These rights may be asserted at any time, and the agency would respond to any requests for these rights. Responding to these rights may require shifting use of current permittees or changing allotment or pasture boundaries. The tight scheduling associated with the proposed action would make it difficult to respond to potential changes caused by tribal assertion of treaty rights.

Measures for evaluating this issue are

- Can tribal treaty rights for pasturing of horses be asserted without initiating a new proposal under NEPA?
- Minimum area for which season of use is defined

Issue 6

Key Issue - Authorizing fall livestock grazing in elk winter concentration areas named the Miller Ridge Area, Starvation Ridge Area, Table Mountain - Joseph Breaks Area, Hunting Camp Ridge Area, and Two Bit - Sumac Area as proposed may not provide enough winter range for big game.

Big-game winter range occurs in the lower elevations of Joseph Creek and its tributaries. Areas designated as Management Area 3 and 1W in the Forest Plan approximate the extent of big-game winter range. However, the area used by big-game was further defined in consultation with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists. Areas of concentrated winter use identified during routine aerial reconnaissance of the Joseph Creek vicinity were identified and named as the Miller Ridge, Starvation Ridge, Table Mountain/Joseph Breaks, Hunting Camp Ridge, and Two-Bit/Sumac areas.

Many of the pastures within these concentration areas are currently grazed in the spring, although some pastures include light use in the fall. Grazing utilization standards currently guide retention of at least 45 percent of the residual plant material, although the areas shown as concentration areas typically receive less than the full allowable utilization. ODFW biologists conclude that current grazing practices do not conflict with the availability of big-game forage, in either summer or winter. However, if changes in the grazing system were made, over-wintering elk should be provided for by retaining at least 50 percent of the plant material.

The measure for this issue is

- Percent plant material retained at the end of fall grazing in the Miller Ridge Area, Starvation Ridge Area, Table Mountain - Joseph Breaks, Hunting Camp Ridge Area, and Two Bit - Sumac Area.

Issue 7

Key Issue - Grazing as proposed for the JCRAA may not adequately provide for long-term range health in the 5 pastures which were identified as having unsatisfactory range condition.

Condition and Trend plots were established throughout the JCRAA in the late 1950s. These plots were revisited in 2003 and the information was used to determine the range condition of the pastures. Because of the long-term nature of Condition and Trend monitoring and relative sparseness of points that have been maintained over time, it is possible for plots to erroneously indicate general pasture conditions. Where plot results conflicted with previous assessments of range conditions, the pastures were reviewed in 2004 to resolve the conflict. The conclusion of this process identified 5 of the 65 pastures in the JCRAA to be in unsatisfactory range condition due to current livestock grazing systems. These five pastures are the Sumac Pasture of the Cougar Allotment, the South Crow and Doe Gulch Pastures of the Crow Creek Allotment, and the Bennett and Upper Swamp Pastures of the Swamp Creek Allotment. Refer to Purpose and Need and the previous Issue 2, for further description of the factors which may be contributing to unsatisfactory range conditions in these 5 pastures. The range condition issue results from the concern that pastures in an unsatisfactory condition may not improve if the current grazing system continues.

Measures for this issue are

- Range condition within 10 to 20 years in the Sumac Pasture of the Cougar Allotment and the South Crow and Doe Gulch Pastures of the Crow Creek Allotment
- Allowable shrub utilization in the Meadow Segment of Swamp Creek

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