

# Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis

## Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Wallowa County, Oregon  
September 2004

Lead Agency                    USDA – Forest Service

Responsible Official        Ryan Falk, Acting Wallowa Valley District Ranger

Further Information        Alicia Glassford, Team Leader  
    Wallowa Valley Ranger District  
    Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
    88401 Highway 82  
    Enterprise, OR 97828  
    (541) 426-5689  
    [aglassford@fs.fed.us](mailto:aglassford@fs.fed.us)

Abstract                        This draft Environmental Impact Statement documents three alternatives analyzed in detail for the Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis which is a proposal to allocate forage for commercial livestock grazing on eleven allotments in the vicinity of Joseph Creek. The Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area is located approximately 15 miles north of Enterprise, Oregon. Alternatives include Alternative 1 (no grazing), Alternative 2 (current management and the proposed action), and Alternative 3. The preferred alternative is Alternative 3 which would authorize grazing using an adaptive approach to grazing management while implementing specific protections for sensitive areas.

Comments                      The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w> or upon request. Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the review period. This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and respond to the comments at one time and to use information acquired in the preparation of the final environmental impact statement, thus avoiding undue delay in the decision-making process. Reviewers have an obligation to structure their participation in the National Environmental Policy Act process so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement. Comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed. Comments must be received no later than November 4, 2004.



# Contents

<b>Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.....</b>	<b>v</b>
---	----------

## **Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need**

Introduction .....	1
Purpose of and Need for Action .....	1
Proposed Action.....	4
Decision Framework .....	4
Analysis Area.....	5
Management Direction .....	5
Analysis File.....	8
Scoping.....	8
Issues .....	9

## **Chapter 2 - Alternatives**

Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail .....	17
Alternatives Considered and Analyzed in Detail.....	18
Alternative Comparison and Summary.....	47
Mitigation Measures .....	49
Monitoring.....	51
Preferred Alternative.....	54

## **Chapter 3 - Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**

Range Resources .....	57
Range Condition .....	57
Issue 7.....	72
Noxious Weeds.....	72
Botanical Resources .....	75
Threatened or Endangered .....	75
Issue 4.....	91
Sensitive .....	92
Aquatic Resources.....	107
Soil Productivity .....	109
Biological Crusts.....	112
Listed Fish Species.....	113
Habitat.....	114
Issue 1 .....	133
Issue 2.....	133
Watershed Cumulative Effects .....	134
Wildlife Resources.....	137
Big Game .....	137
Issue 6.....	147
Riparian Habitat .....	150
Unique Habitats .....	152
Old Growth Associated Species.....	155
Migratory and Other Landbirds .....	161

Bats.....	163
PETS (Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive).....	165
Recreation Resources.....	168
Scenic Resources.....	170
Specially Designated Areas.....	173
Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River.....	178
Potential Research Natural Areas.....	180
Issue 3.....	182
Joseph Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area.....	182
Specifically Required Disclosures.....	186
Issue 5.....	190
<b>Chapter 4 – Persons and Agencies Consulted.....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Appendix A – Issue Tracking Summary.....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>R-1</b>
<b>Index.....</b>	<b>I-1</b>

# **Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

This draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analyzes and discloses the potential site-specific environmental effects of a proposal to authorize livestock grazing within the Joseph Creek Rangeland Analysis Area (JCRAA). The JCRAA includes 11 livestock grazing allotments and covers 95,555 acres on the Wallowa Valley Ranger District of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Refer to Figure 1 in the DEIS.

## **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 of and need for action is generated by the difference between existing conditions and desired conditions for forage in the JCRAA. Desired conditions are for satisfactory range conditions as evaluated on a pasture-wide basis. Satisfactory range conditions occur where range is in fair to good condition with stable or upward trend. A more specific description of desired range conditions by Management Area is contained in the DEIS.

Existing 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 is contained in the DEIS.

## **Key Issues**

Of the public and agency concerns raised during the scoping process, seven key issues were developed as follows. The remaining concerns were addressed throughout the analysis as outlined in Appendix A.

## Summary

### **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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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

## Alternatives

A total of three alternatives were analyzed in detail.

Alternative 1 represents the ‘no grazing’ alternative. Under this alternative, all Term Grazing Permits would be canceled upon implementation of the decision and resolution of the appeals process. No permits would be issued for the eleven affected allotments.

Alternative 2 represents continuation of the current grazing systems and is the Proposed Action. The 11 allotments and their associated pastures would be stocked at the same level that is currently authorized. Permits would be issued to continue the current grazing system.

Alternative 3 was developed with acknowledgement that changes will occur in resource conditions, issues, and agency direction throughout time. This alternative incorporates adaptive management techniques to address those changes. Potential changes that this alternative may respond to include wildfire, drought, ranching operational changes, ecological conditions, Federal listing of additional species under the Endangered Species Act, Forest Plan revision, and possible execution of Tribal treaty rights. Alternative 3 is the ‘preferred alternative’. The 11 allotments would be stocked at the same level as Alternative 2. Stocking of individual pastures within the 11 allotments would be determined by resource conditions rather than recent stocking levels.

## Resolution of Issues by Alternative

The following table displays how the alternatives respond to the key issues.

Issue and Indicators	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
<b>Issue 1: Wild and Scenic River</b>			
• Percent streambank stability in 10 yrs	95	95	95
• Increases In summer water temperature in 10 yrs	0	0	0
• Increases in % cobble embeddedness in 10 yrs	0	0	0
• Decreases in stream shade in 10 yrs	0	0	0
• Allowable shrub utilization in WSR Corridor	wildlife only	30	20
• Allowable forage utilization in WSR Corridor	wildlife only	55	50
<b>Issue 2: Wild and Scenic River</b>			
• Allowable utilization of shrubs in the Meadow Segment of Swamp Creek	0	Up to 30	Determined by monitoring
• Streambank stability along the meadow section of Swamp Creek in five to ten years	95	75 to 85	85 to 95
<b>Issue 3 - Potential Research Natural Areas</b>			
• Area within the potential Horse Pasture Ridge RNA maintained as good or excellent	250 acres	250 acres	250 acres
• Area within the potential Haystack Rock RNA	400 acres	400 acres	400 acres

Issue and Indicators	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
maintained as good or excellent			
<b>Issue 4 – Spalding’s Catchfly</b>			
• Spalding’s catchfly risk areas subjected to livestock grazing impacts	0	10,662	10,662
• Acres of risk areas that would be inventoried for the presence of Spalding’s catchfly within 3 to 6 years	0	3,032	5922 to 10,662
<b>Issue 5 – Adaptive Management</b>			
• Treaty rights asserted without further analysis?	No	No	Yes
• Minimum area where stocking is specified.	Not Applicable	Pasture	Allotment
<b>Issue 6 – Big Game Winter Range</b>			
• Percent plant material retained at the end of fall grazing in the Starvation Ridge Area, Miller Ridge Area, Hunting Camp Ridge Area, Two Bit / Sumac Area and Table Mountain/Joseph Breaks Area.	100 %	45 %	50 %
<b>Issue 7 – Range Condition</b>			
• Range conditions within 10 to 20 years in the Sumac Pasture	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
• Range conditions within 10 to 20 years in the South Crow and Doe Gulch Pastures	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
• Allowable utilization of shrubs in the Meadow Segment of Swamp Creek	0%	Less than 30%	Determined by monitoring

## Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The affected environment and environmental consequences were disclosed for range, botanical, aquatic, wildlife, recreation, and scenic resources and specially designated areas. The alternatives were found to be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines, including Forest Plan amendments such as PacFish, the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, and the Wallowa-Whitman Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The environmental consequences indicate consistency with the Clean Water Act and the Wild and Scenic River Act and processes have been followed consistent with the Endangered Species Act. For further information, refer to Pages 57 through 191 of the DEIS.

## *Summary*