

## **Environmental Assessment #OR-014-08-04**

**PROJECT TITLE/TYPE:** Kellison Allotment Grazing Lease Modification

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The Kellison Allotment consists of 335 acres of BLM-administered land in T38S, R11E, Sections 27 and 34. (see attached map).

**BLM OFFICE:** Klamath Falls Resource Area, Lakeview District

**LEASE/SERIAL/CASE FILE #:** Kellison Allotment #00834, Grazing Lease #3601037

**APPLICANT (IF ANY):** N/A

### **CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN**

This proposed action is subject to one or more of the following land use plans:

- Klamath Falls Resource Area Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan and Rangeland Program Summary (KFRA ROD/RMP/RPS), approved June 1995
- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States FEIS and ROD (1991)
- Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program FEIS and ROD (1985) and Supplement (1987)
- Integrated Weed Control Plan (IWCP) 1993
- Rangeland Reform '94 FEIS and ROD (1995)
- Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington (1997)
- Standards for Land Health for Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington (1998)
- National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (2004)
- Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy and Assessment for Oregon, Draft (2005)

### **Remarks:**

None

### **PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

An assessment and evaluation of resource conditions for the Kellison Allotment was completed by an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists during 2003. A determination was made on January 30, 2004 that the allotment was not meeting all of the Standards for Rangeland Health as required by 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart 4180 (Rangeland Health). Specifically, Standard 1 Watershed Function-Uplands, Standard 3 Ecological Processes, and Standard 5 Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species were not met and livestock grazing was identified as a causal factor. As required by the Rangeland Health regulations, appropriate actions must be taken to bring grazing activities into conformance with grazing guidelines or to modify them so that significant progress can be made toward achieving the Standards.

During 2004 through 2007 the allotment was voluntarily rested from grazing by the lease holder. The current grazing lease for the allotment will expire on 2/28/2008. To continue authorized grazing that is

designed to make progress towards meeting the Standards, some modifications to the current grazing lease are necessary.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

The Kellison Allotment has 335 acres in two distinct parcels of 240 acres and 95 acres. The main reason that the allotment did not meet the above mentioned Standards was due to a large infestation of exotic annual grasses, mainly medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*), in the 95 acre parcel of the allotment. The assessment and evaluation recommended that the 95 acre parcel be rested from grazing for a minimum of 10 years and then be reevaluated. This action would help decrease the spread of the medusahead to new areas of the allotment. It would also allow some of the native vegetation to reestablish and increase in areas where the medusahead is less dense. Due to the presence of scattered occurrences of medusahead in the 240 acre parcel and its proximity to the dense infestations in the 95 acre parcel, the 240 acre parcel would also be rested from livestock grazing.

The current grazing lease for the Kellison Allotment authorizes 19 AUMs of cattle use from May 1 to June 13. The proposed action would be the issuance of a new grazing lease for the Kellison Allotment authorizing non use of the allotment. The term of the lease would be March 1, 2008 through February 28, 2018, ten years as authorized by the grazing regulations at 43 CFR §4130.2(d). The Terms and Conditions on the new lease would stipulate that no livestock grazing would be allowed on the allotment until satisfactory control of the medusahead has been achieved.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### **No Action**

This alternative would issue a new grazing lease with the same parameters as the current lease. The current grazing lease for the Kellison Allotment authorizes 19 AUMs of cattle use from May 1 to June 13. All areas of the allotment would be open for livestock grazing. A No Action alternative would not meet the requirements of the grazing regulations cited above that require changes to be made when an allotment is not meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health.

### **Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed**

#### **Active Management of Medusahead**

Resting the 95 acre parcel from livestock grazing and actively managing the medusahead infestation was also considered. Current treatment methods for medusahead on rangelands involving prescribed burning, herbicide application, and reseeding or a combination of these methods have shown mixed results. Some of the herbicides that have shown good results in controlling medusahead are not currently allowed for use on BLM lands in Oregon and Washington due to a court ordered injunction. Prescribed burning has shown good results in initial control of the weed, but follow-up treatments with herbicides in combination with successful seeding of grass and forb species are usually needed for longer term control. There are currently several research projects on medusahead control and revegetation strategies being conducted by university and agency scientists that will hopefully result in effective prescriptions for control of medusahead. Although it is desirable to actively treat medusahead, it was determined that this alternative will not be analyzed at this time. This alternative would be analyzed in a separate document, as improved methodologies and funding are available.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **Soils**

According to the Soil Survey of Klamath County, Oregon (Southern Part), April 1985, the Kellison allotment has Lorella very stony loam as the dominant soil type. The Lorella series consists of shallow,

well drained soils on escarpments and rock benches. Nearly all areas of this soil are used for range and wildlife habitat in Klamath County. Scattered inclusions of Calimus fine sandy loam and Fordney loamy fine sand are also present. These two soils are typically very deep with the Calimus being well drained and the Fordney being excessively drained.

### **Watershed**

The Kellison allotment is within the Langell Valley 5<sup>th</sup> field watershed. The watershed area is dominated by a broad alluvial valley which is almost entirely in agricultural production. The valley is surrounded arid hillslope areas. The allotment area is moderately sloped and prone to rill and gully erosion if vegetation cover is inadequate. There are no intermittent or perennial streams in the allotment area

### **Vegetation**

#### **Special Status Species – Botany**

This allotment was systematically surveyed for special status vascular plants most recently in 1994. No special status vascular plant species populations were found within this allotment.

#### **Noxious Weeds**

This allotment was systematically surveyed for botanical resources most recently in 1994. Several introduced, weedy species were noted to occur in the allotment. Only one noxious weed targeted for treatment, Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), was noted to occur in the allotment, but the location(s) was not mapped.

### **Wildlife**

#### **Special Status Species**

No listed, proposed or candidate species under the Endangered Species Act occur within the two grazing allotments. Therefore no impacts to these species would occur from the proposed change in grazing management. There is also no Bureau Sensitive Species known to occur within the grazing allotments.

#### **Landbirds (Birds of Conservation Concern)**

There is only one special status species bird, the Brewer's sparrow, which may use portions of the two grazing allotments. The brewer's sparrow is typically associated with big sage brush but utilizes other shrub habitat as well. They typically nest in the upper portion of big sage brush and forage on insects gleaned from sagebrush leaves and branches (Marshal et al 2003). No formal surveys have been completed within the allotment but the brewer's sparrow has been documented on the resource area in similar habitat.

Current habitat conditions, especially those areas infested with medusa head provide little habitat for the brewer's sparrow and other landbirds. The shrub component has been reduced (USDI ESI data) in the area where the medusa head has taken over and therefore provides no nesting structure and reduces foraging opportunities for the brewer sparrow.

### **Non Special Status Species**

#### **Mule Deer**

The area is classified as mule deer winter range by ODFW and the KFRA ROD/RMP. The area has deer use year round but there is a significant increase in the winter months. Deer move from the high elevations when snow accumulates and their forage becomes covered and spend the winter in the lower elevation where shrubs are still available for browsing.

The portions of the allotment that are infested with medusa head provide little to no forage and cover for mule deer and these infested areas limit shrubs (bitterbrush and sagebrush) from occupying the area.

## **Livestock Grazing**

The current grazing lease for the Kellison Allotment authorizes 19 AUMs of cattle use from May 1 to June 13 on the 335 acre allotment. The property boundaries of the allotment are fenced although many sections are in disrepair. There are no sources of livestock water on the allotment.

As noted in the Purpose and Need section above, the allotment did not meet all of the Oregon Standards for Rangeland Health when it was assessed in 2003. This was mainly due to the presence of the exotic annual grasses medusahead and cheatgrass. There are several ecological sites present on the allotment that provide various levels of forage for livestock. A complete description of these ecological sites can be found in the Rangeland Health Standards Assessment for the Kellison Allotment found in the grazing files in the Klamath Falls BLM office.

## **Cultural Resources**

Prehistorically, the project area falls within Modoc Indian territory. Ray (1963:202) notes that the Modoc territory was divided into three geographic areas that were named after those who lived in those areas. Of these three areas, the project area falls within the territory of the *Kokiwas* (literally, "People of the far out country"). A permanent Modoc/*Kokiwas* village site was once located around 2.5 air miles south of the project area at the present town site of Bonanza. The village site was called *Nushalta'ga*. Ray (1963:210) described the village as "a summer fishing village, especially populous during the fishing season".

The Modoc culture relied heavily on lowland marsh, lacustrine, and riverine resources. No such habitat lies within the project area which is composed mostly of an upland slope. Though perhaps more sporadic than lowland use, ethnographic and archaeological information has documented somewhat intensive use of the upland areas for resource procurement and spiritual enrichment.

Historic contact between Klamath Basin Indian tribes and Euro-Americans began during the early 1820s and culminated with the Klamath Lake Treaty of 1864 in which the lands in and around the project area were ceded to the United States by the Klamath Tribes (Minor et al. 1979:185). The Klamath Tribes consists of Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin peoples.

By the mid 1800s, Euro-Americans began settling the Klamath Basin. Early historic economic activity centered on trapping, lumber, and grazing industries. The closest town is Bonanza. Bonanza was founded in 1873 next to Big Springs on Lost River. Its founding correlates with the first homestead filed in Klamath County by I.P. Chandler (Helfrich 1972:41). Today, the local economy revolves around agriculture.

## **Recreation**

Existing recreation uses include dispersed motorized use, mainly ATV use, hunting, hiking and sight seeing. This allotment has limited motorized access which greatly reduces the overall amount of recreation uses to the properties.

## **Fuels**

The expansion of exotic annual grasses such as medusahead has substantially increased frequency of fire in the western United States. Medusahead has a fine structure and its herbage dries completely; therefore, its standing dead biomass is extremely flammable. The hazard of wildfire is further increased by considerable litter. Medusahead litter decomposes more slowly than that of most plants, therefore making stands of this annual grass a fire hazard. The long-lasting litter formed by medusahead is easily ignited and burns readily. Invasion can initiate a cycle where a non-native grass colonizes an area and provides the fine fuel necessary for the initiation and propagation of fire. Fires then increase in frequency and extent. Following these grass-fueled fires, non-native grasses recover more rapidly than

native species and cause a further increase in fire. Frequent fires destroy the shrub component of the plant community, and potentially part of the bunchgrass community, without destroying significant amounts of medusahead seed. (Archer, 2001)

The allotments are located within Bonanza’s Wildland Urban Interface. They have been identified as Fire Regime II, Condition Class III using the Standard Landscape method. The condition class is primarily due to the extensive presence of invasive exotic species.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

The potential environmental impacts resulting from the alternatives relative to the following critical resource values were evaluated. The following is a summary of the results:

Critical Element/ Resource Value	Affected		Critical Element/ Resource Value	Affected	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality		X	T & E Species		X
ACEC/RNAs		X	Wilderness		X
Cultural Resources		X	Wild & Scenic Rivers		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Hazardous Wastes		X
Floodplains		X	Water Quality		X
Native American Cultural/ Religious Concerns		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Low Income/ Minority Populations		X	Noxious Weeds	X	

**DESCRIPTION OF OTHER IMPACTS**

**Soils**

**Proposed Action**

The proposed action should result in both short term and long term positive impacts to the soils in the allotment. In the short term, resting the allotment from livestock grazing would reduce soil surface disturbance from livestock hooves. This would result in less soil displacement from wind and water induced erosion. Soil compaction resulting from livestock use during wet soil periods would also be reduced. In the long term, a vegetation shift from the shallow rooted exotic annual grass species to more native perennials would provide improved soil stability and increased infiltration rates resulting in less soil movement.

**No Action**

The no action alternative would result in continued soil surface disturbance from livestock which would increase the possibility for water and wind induced soil erosion. Soil compaction from livestock grazing on wet soils would also continue. The existing exotic annual grasses would also likely increase on the allotment resulting in less stable soils that would be more susceptible to erosion.

**Watershed**

**Proposed Action**

Under the proposed action, watershed processes would be improved to the extent that annual grasses are replaced by more erosion resistant plants such as perennial grasses and shrubs. In general, soils covered with shrubs and grasses have higher water infiltration rates and are resistant to erosion and rain induced compaction and hence. It is unlikely that these effects would be measurable at the sub-

watershed scale or in any nearby perennial surface water bodies due to the limited extent of the area and the position in the watershed, and the lack of intermittent or perennial streams.

### **No Action**

Under no action alternative, the continued spread of annual grasses would reduce watershed function by increasing surface runoff, increasing erosion, and decreasing water and nutrient infiltration.

## **Vegetation**

### **Special Status Species – Botany**

#### **Proposed Action**

No special status plant species are known to occur in the allotment; therefore the proposed action would have no direct effect on special status plant species. However, reducing the amount of disturbance from grazing activities would reduce the competitive advantage that noxious weeds and other invasive species have over native plant species, including special status plant species, under these conditions.

#### **No Action**

No special status plant species are known to occur in the allotment; therefore the no action alternative would have no direct effect on special status plant species. However, the continued disturbance from grazing activities would continue to provide the conditions under which noxious weeds and other invasive species have a competitive advantage relative to native plant species, including special status plant species.

### **Noxious Weeds**

Targeted noxious weed species would be treated through the resource area integrated noxious weed program as they are discovered. Neither the proposed action nor the no action alternative uses machinery or equipment that may introduce noxious weeds from outside the allotment; therefore, no prevention measures are necessary.

#### **Proposed Action**

The proposed action would reduce the amount of disturbance from grazing activities in the allotment and gradually reduce the disturbed environmental conditions under which noxious weeds and other invasive species have a competitive advantage relative to native species and other desirable vegetation. The potential for new noxious weeds to establish and the potential for the spread of existing noxious weeds would be reduced.

#### **No Action**

The continued disturbance from grazing activities would continue to provide the conditions under which noxious weeds and other invasive species have a competitive advantage relative to native plant species. There would continue to be a potential for the establishment of new noxious weeds and the spread of existing noxious weeds.

## **Wildlife**

### **Special Status Species – Landbirds**

#### **Proposed Action**

Under the proposed action there would be potential benefits to the Brewer sparrow and other sage brush associated species by temporarily removing grazing from both allotments. This would reduce the spread of medusa head from cattle into uninfested areas and maintain current habitat conditions were they are currently suitable. The removal of cattle would also allow the native vegetation to get a stronger hold on the area and again reduce the rate of spread. In the concentrated medusa head patches the reestablishment of sagebrush and other native shrub species would benefit the Brewer's sparrow by providing both nesting and foraging habitat (Marshal et al 2003). The reestablishment of native vegetation in infested areas would most likely be done under a subsequent action of active management and not under the proposed action. .

### No Action

The no action would continue the spread of noxious weeds into areas currently not infested with medusa head. Livestock, wildlife, water, and air have all been shown to move the medusa head seed. However seeds are primarily spread from the coats and intestinal tracts of grazing animals (Furbush 1953). As medusa head spreads the quality and quantity of habitat for landbirds, particularly sagebrush associated species, would continue to decline. As medusa head spreads the fire frequency within the sagebrush habitat would increase, therefore increasing the risk of habitat loss from fire.

### **Non Special Status Species – Mule deer**

#### Proposed Action

Under the proposed action removing grazing temporarily would likely slow the spread of medusa head within the allotments. Medusa head is only modestly palatable and is the least desirable forage plant for mule deer (Bodurtha et al 1989). Medusa head has been shown to out-compete the native vegetation therefore limiting the amount of forage available for mule deer. Additionally medusa head has been shown to increase the fire frequency therefore increasing the risk of a stand replacing fire (Knapp 1998). In the sagebrush ecosystem frequent fires can remove the shrub component and produce a monoculture of medusa head.

Limiting its spread and actively managing known populations would slow the spread, maintain the current fire frequency and reduce the source population. The proposed action (without active management of the source population) would at a minimum reduce the spread and maintain the current fire frequency which would both be beneficial to mule deer winter range habitat. However the source population would continue to spread by grazing animals such as mule deer and by wind and water. Controlling the source population should be considered in future management for both allotments.

Additionally limiting the spread of medusa head and other invasive species would also benefit other sagebrush associated wildlife by limiting the loss of other native vegetation.

### No Action

Under the no action, the medusa head distribution and density would likely increase overtime. Since livestock and other grazing animals distribute the seed (Furbush 1953) it is probable that the medusa head sources within these two allotments would increase at a faster rate than without cattle. Both of the allotments are classified as winter range. The objective in the Klamath Falls Management Plan for winter range is to maintain or improve habitat. (KFRA EIS 2-30). As medusa head increases the quality and quantity of mule deer habitat would continue to decrease therefore not meeting our objectives for winter range.

### **Livestock Grazing**

#### Proposed Action

The proposed action would result in no livestock grazing on the Kellison allotment for a period of 10 years. If the rest period results in decreased levels of medusahead, then the forage base for livestock grazing would be improved for future use.

### No Action

The no action alternative would allow for the possible spread and increase in the levels of medusahead on the allotment. This would have a negative impact on the amounts of livestock forage in the allotment.

### **Cultural Resources**

#### Proposed Action

In accordance with Section 110 and 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended (Public Law 89-665; 16 USC 470-470w-6), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

of 1969 (Public Law 91-190; 42 USC 4321-4347 and applicable regulations (36 CFR Part 60, 63, 800 and 40 CFR Parts 1500-08), a BLM Class I literature review was conducted. Findings indicated that the project area has been previously surveyed following current BLM Class III survey standards. No cultural resources were found within the project area.

Allowing the Kellison Allotment to rest and amending the grazing lease to reflect this action should not impact cultural resources.

#### No Action

Under the no action alternative, known archaeological sites would continue to be protected from ground disturbing activities. The project area has been completely surveyed and there are no known sites.

#### **Recreation**

##### Proposed Action

The proposed alternative would not likely change the types or amount of recreation use.

##### No Action

The No Action alternative would not likely change the types or amount of recreation use.

#### **Fuels**

##### Proposed Action

The proposed alternative would result in a short-term increase in fine fuel load and corresponding wildfire hazard. However, the vegetation composition shift from annual invasive grasses to native perennials would reduce wildfire hazard below current levels.

##### No Action

The No Action alternative would likely result in continued expansion of exotic annuals and a corresponding increase in wildfire hazard.

#### **Air Quality**

Neither alternative would have a significant impact on air quality.

### **CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

Cumulative impacts are expected to be negligible for any resource under either alternative.

### **PREPARERS**

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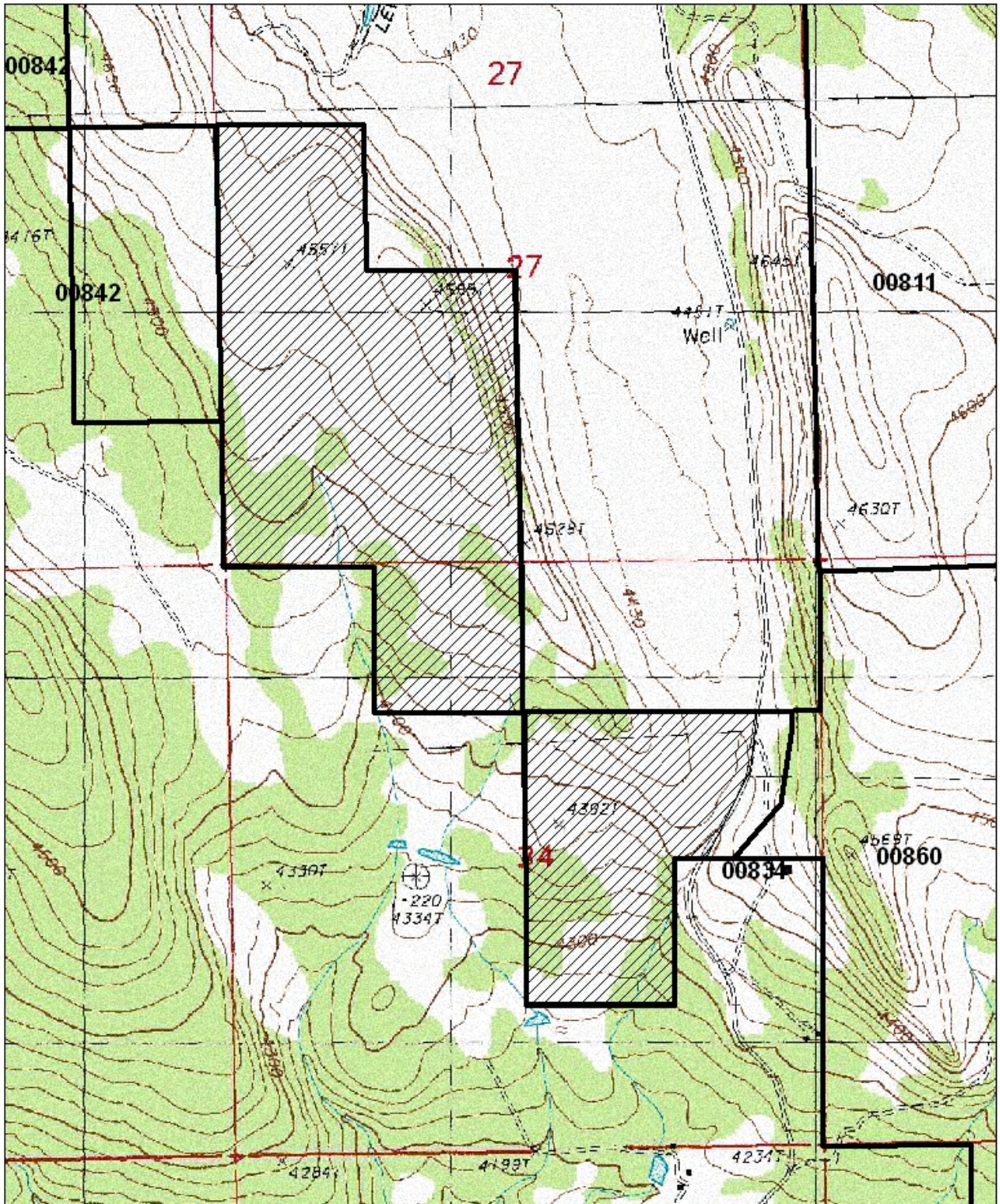
Eric Johnson, Fuels Specialist

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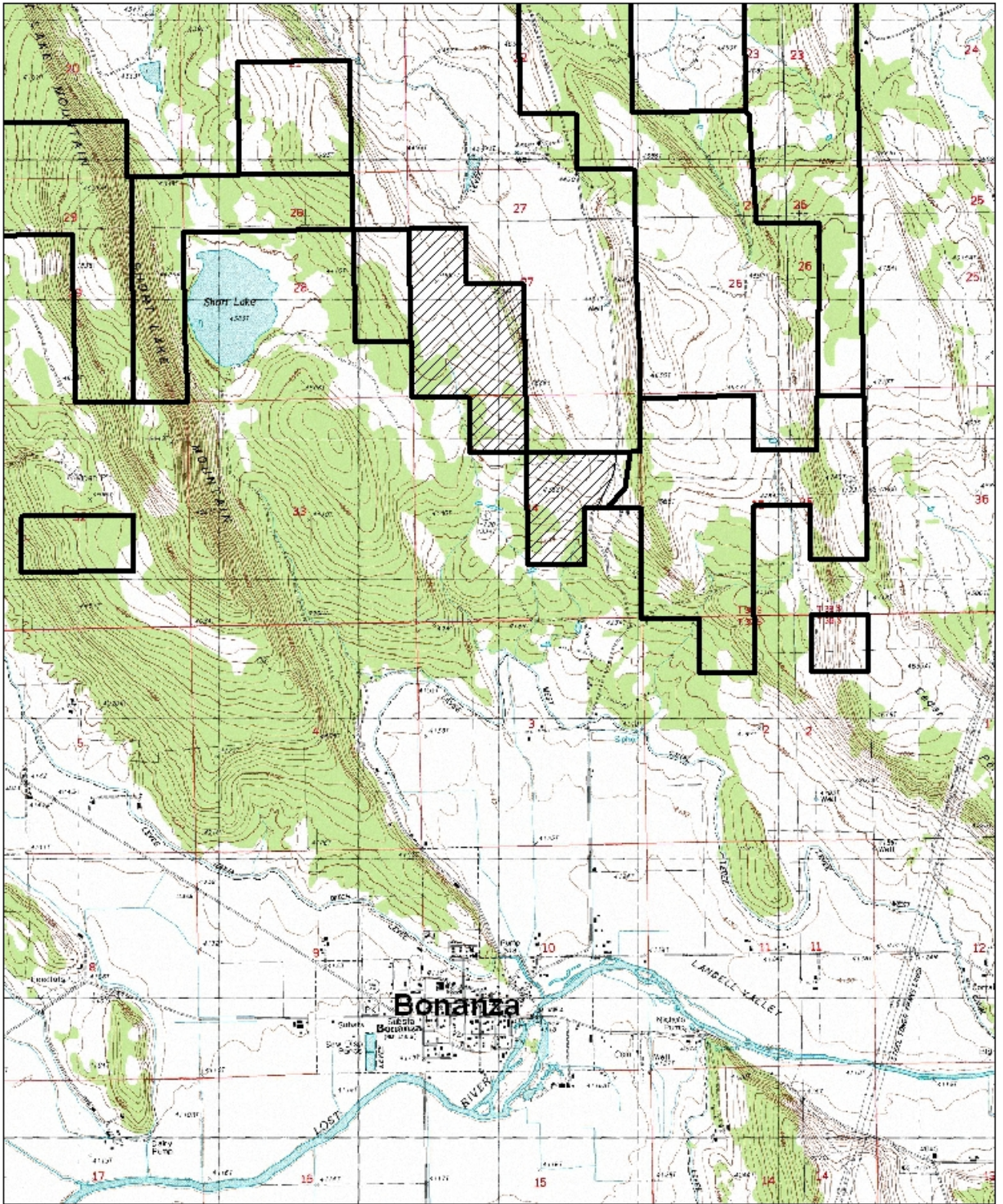
**Kellison Allotment  
#00834**

Proposed Rest Area 

0 0.1 0.2 Miles



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**Kellison Allotment -**   
**#00834**

0 0.2 0.4 Miles



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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**  
**for the**  
**Kellison Allotment Grazing Lease Modification Environmental Assessment**  
**EA #OR-014-08-04**

**Introduction**

As a result of the completion of a Rangeland Health Standards Assessment for the Kellison Allotment (#00834), a determination was made that the allotment was not meeting all of the Standards for Rangeland Health as required by 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart 4180 (Rangeland Health). Specifically, Standard 1 Watershed Function-Uplands, Standard 3 Ecological Processes and Standard 5 Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species were not met and livestock grazing was identified as a causal factor. The Kellison Allotment has 335 acres in two distinct parcels of 240 acres and 95 acres. The main reason that the allotment did not meet the above mentioned Standards was due to a large infestation of exotic annual grasses, mainly medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*), in the 95 acre parcel of the allotment.

As required by the Rangeland Health regulations, appropriate actions must be taken to bring grazing activities into conformance with grazing guidelines or to modify them so that significant progress can be made toward achieving the Standards. To continue authorized grazing that is designed to make progress towards meeting the Standards, some modifications to the current grazing lease were determined necessary prior to renewal. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Lakeview District, Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA), has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA #OR-014-08-05) to analyze a proposal to modify the current grazing lease. The EA considered two alternatives:

Alternative A – Proposed Action

The proposed action would be the issuance of a new grazing lease for the Kellison Allotment authorizing non-use of the allotment. The term of the lease would be March 1, 2008 through February 28, 2018, ten years as authorized by the grazing regulations at 43 CFR §4130.2(d). The Terms and Conditions on the new lease would stipulate that no livestock grazing would be allowed on the allotment until satisfactory control of the medusahead has been achieved.

Alternative B – No Action

This alternative would issue a new grazing lease with no changes in the parameters of the current lease. The current grazing lease for the Kellison Allotment authorizes 19 AUMs of cattle use from May 1 to June 13. All areas of the allotment would be open for livestock grazing. A No Action alternative would not meet the requirements of the grazing regulations cited above that require changes to be made when an allotment is not meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health.

**Determination**

The proposed action and no action alternatives were analyzed for significant effects as per the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27. The following criteria listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b) were considered and found to be not applicable to this action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and precedents for future actions with significant effects.

The following unique characteristics (Critical Elements of the Human Environment), listed in 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(3), are not present and will not be affected: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; wilderness; solid or hazardous waste; and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

In regard to 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(8), no adverse impacts are expected to cultural, scientific, or historical resources. The Kellison Allotment project area has been surveyed following current BLM Class III

survey standards. No cultural resources were found within the project area. Allowing the Kellison Allotment to rest and amending the Grazing Lease to reflect this action should not impact cultural resources.

There will be no significant impacts to any special status terrestrial species or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act [40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(9)]. No Designated Critical Habitat or known sites of special status terrestrial species occur within the project area.

As per 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(10), this action conforms with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. The action is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice. No potential impacts to low-income or minority populations have been identified internally by the BLM or externally through public involvement.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider effects of this decision on the National Energy Policy. There will be no known adverse effect on the National Energy Policy or on energy resources.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the environmental assessment, it is my determination that neither alternative analyzed constitutes a significant impact affecting the quality of the human environment greater than those addressed in the following:

- Final - Klamath Falls Resource Area Management Plan and EIS (FEIS), 1994
- Klamath Falls Resource Area Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan and Rangeland Program Summary, 1995 (KFRA ROD/RMP)

I have determined that this action will not have any significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and an environmental impact statement is not required. I have further determined that the proposed action conforms to management direction from and will contribute to meeting the objectives of the Klamath Falls Resource Area Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, as amended. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement, or a supplement to the existing RMP or Environmental Impact Statement, is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Signed: /s/ Donald J. Holmstrom  
Donald J. Holmstrom, Field Manager  
Klamath Falls Resource Area

Date: 3/28/08