



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

September, 2003



Final Environmental Impact Statement

Upper & Lower East Fork Cattle and Horse Allotment Management Plans

**Sawtooth National Recreation Area,
Sawtooth National Forest,
Custer County, Idaho**

Township 7 and 8 North
Range 15, 16, 17 East
Boise Meridian

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**UPPER AND LOWER EAST FORK C & H ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Custer County, State of Idaho**

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Abstract:

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the analysis conducted for the Upper and Lower East Fork Cattle and Horse Allotments. The allotment management plans (AMPs) involve National Forest System lands within the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests. The analysis of the current condition of the Upper and Lower East Fork Allotments has found that the existing grazing system does not comply with the direction, standards and guidelines of both the Sawtooth and Challis Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (FLRMPs) or the intent of PL 92-400 which established the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA). The proposed action of this FEIS is to bring management of the allotments into compliance with the FLRMPs and PL 92-400 by authorizing permitted grazing that meets or moves toward desired resource conditions.

The FEIS describes three alternatives for managing the allotments. The alternatives are: Alt. 1 - Continued grazing as currently permitted (no action / no change); Alt. 2 - Reduced stocking rate and permitted area; and Alt. 3 – Discontinue grazing of domestic livestock.

SUMMARY

The Sawtooth National Recreation Area of the Sawtooth National Forest proposes to authorize grazing through updated Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) for the Upper and Lower East Fork Cattle & Horse Allotments. The area affected by the proposal (Upper East Fork Allotment and Lower East Fork Allotment), is located on the east side of the White Cloud Mountain range in Custer County, south of Clayton, ID and is administered by the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) of the Sawtooth National Forest. The allotments are located in portions of Townships 7 and 8 North and Ranges 15, 16, and 17 East, Boise Meridian. This action is needed because existing conditions on the allotments do not meet the desired conditions identified in the FLRMPs or the intent of PL 92-400.

The proposed action of this EIS is to authorize grazing; to update the AMPs; and to allow for permitted livestock grazing that meets or moves toward desired resource conditions. An adaptive management strategy, which would allow for flexibility during the implementation of the grazing strategy, would allow permittees to respond to changing conditions and unexpected results. Permitted numbers and seasons would be modified as necessary to meet standards, based on monitoring results of the previous season. Significant Issues identified included impacts to hydrology, fisheries, wildlife, recreation, and livestock management.

These issues led the agency to develop alternatives to the proposed action including:

- Alt. 1 - Continued grazing as currently permitted (no action / no change);
- Alt. 2 - Reduced stocking rate and permitted area (Preferred Alternative);
- Alt. 3 – Discontinue grazing of domestic livestock.

Major conclusions include: The analysis indicates that riparian areas are at less than desired condition and may be improved through improved grazing management. Due to continued over utilization, Alt. 1 would maintain these acres in less than desired conditions, but all other alternatives would provide the opportunity to meet the desired condition and utilization levels.

The primary difference between the alternatives is the degree of expected improvement in riparian function, amount of grazing (head months), and amount of acres available. Alt. 3 is expected to improve riparian function the most, although Alt. 2 moves towards improved riparian function at a slower rate. Improvement of riparian function is not expected to occur under Alt. 1. Under Alt. 3, elimination of grazing makes this alternative the least economical for permittees.

Based upon the effects of the alternatives, the responsible official will decide if and where grazing by domestic livestock will occur within the analysis area, and at what intensity (timing and duration); and if it occurs, what structural range improvements (fences, water troughs, etc.) if any, are needed.

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CHAPTER 1. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

Background

The Upper and Lower East Fork Cattle & Horse Allotments are located in the White Cloud Mountain range in Custer County, south of Clayton, ID and are administered by the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) of the Sawtooth National Forest. The allotments are located in portions of Townships 7 and 8 North and Ranges 15, 16, and 17 East, Boise Meridian.

The Upper East Fork Allotment covers 58,000 total acres, of which 3,450 acres are currently considered appropriate for grazing. The remaining area is timbered or steep and rocky. Major drainages include Bowery Creek, the South and West Forks of the East Fork Salmon River, West Pass Creek, and the main stem of the East Fork Salmon River above Germania Creek. The Bowery Creek drainage, within the Sawtooth National Forest proclaimed boundary but outside the SNRA proclaimed boundary, is administered by the Challis National Forest. By agreement with the permittee and the Challis National Forest in 2000, the north boundary of the Bowery Creek drainage has been extended to include Deer Creek and is considered part of the Upper East Fork allotment. A private land parcel of about 160 acres owned by the permittee lies within the allotment.

The Lower East Fork Allotment covers 73,000 total acres, of which 15,000 acres are currently considered appropriate for grazing. The remaining area is timbered or steep and rocky. Major drainages include Silver Rule, Mill, Holman, French, Sullivan, Big Lake, Big Boulder, Little Boulder, Wickiup, and Germania Creeks.

On August 22, 1972, Congress passed Public Law 92-400 (PL 92-400) establishing the SNRA. The intent of establishing the SNRA was to protect the area's primary values of fish and wildlife resources, and the natural, scenic, pastoral, and historical values, and recreation attributes.

SNRA Management Area direction in the revised 2003 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLRMP) (pg III-131) further states:

“Management, utilization, and disposal of natural resources on federally owned lands (such as timber, grazing and mineral resources) are allowed only insofar as their utilization will not substantially impair achievement of the purposes for which the recreation area was established. ‘Substantial Impairment’ is defined as that level of disturbance of the values of the SNRA which is incompatible with the standards of the General Management Plan. The proposed activities will be evaluated as to (1) the period of impact, (2) the area affected, and (3) the importance of the impact on SNRA Values. Use process guidance in Appendix I to assist in determining compliance with this standard.”

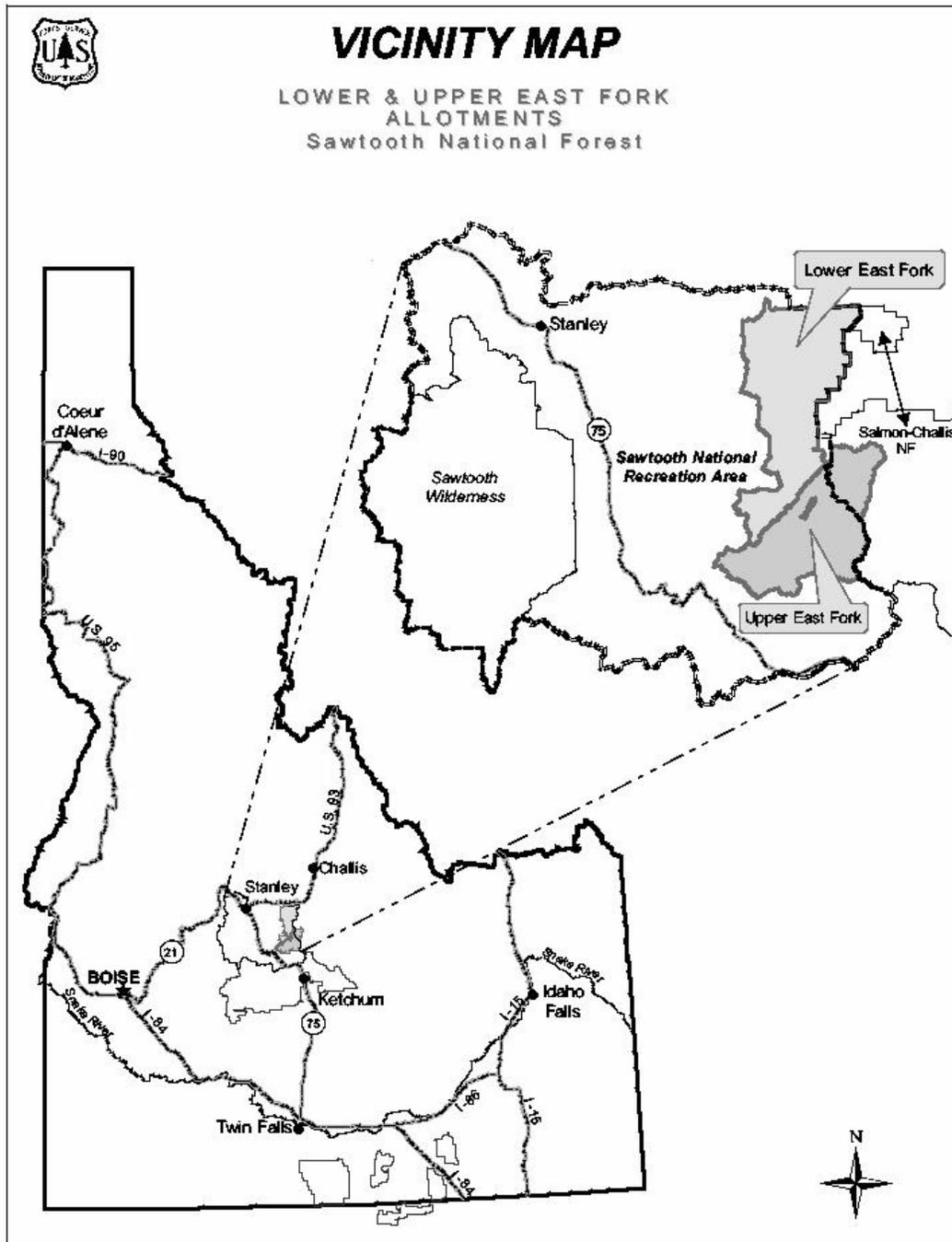


Figure I-1 – Vicinity Map of the Project Area

Changes from DEIS to FEIS

The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) appeared in the Federal Register on April 7, 2003. The comment period on the DEIS, as published in the NOA, ended on May 30, 2003. A total of 212 responses were received during the comment period and an additional 12 comments were received after the comment period closed. The responses were analyzed using the content analysis process by the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). Appendix E of the FEIS provides a summary of who commented, what the main comments were, and the Agency's response to those comments.

Based on the comments received, the significant issue statements of this Chapter have been updated. While no new significant issues were identified from public comment, additional information and concerns related to the existing issues were received. This new information has been incorporated into the issue descriptions.

Additionally, the DEIS was published under the direction of the 1987 Sawtooth FLRMP which, was in the process of being revised at the time of release of the DEIS. As described in the "Related Efforts" section of Chapter one of the DEIS, "a review of proposed language for the revised FLRMP was conducted to determine consistency with the mitigation measures included in the proposed action and alternatives. It is our intent to be consistent with the final revised FLRMP upon its completion." Since release of the DEIS, the Forest completed its revision effort with the publication of a Record of Decision revising the Sawtooth FLRMP in July, 2003. The revised FLRMP officially went in to effect September 6, 2003, therefore final direction from the revised FLRMP has been incorporated into the alternative descriptions and effects analysis for this FEIS.

Purpose & Need for Action

The allotment management plans for the Upper and Lower East Fork Allotments were approved in 1976 and 1981 (revised in 1985) respectively. Since these plans were originally approved, there have been several changed conditions, including the listing of several species under the Endangered Species Act. As previously stated, the majority of these allotments fall within the proclaimed boundary of the SNRA and therefore subject to PL 92-400.. Analysis of the current condition of the two allotments has found that the SNRA primary values are being impacted. Impacts from livestock to fisheries, wildlife, and vegetation, and conflicts with recreationists are occurring, indicating a need for change in current livestock management practices. The purpose of the proposed action is to update the allotment management plans to address changed conditions by allowing for permitted livestock grazing that meets or moves towards desired resource conditions.

Livestock grazing in closed areas inside and outside allotment boundaries is a persistent problem. Frog and Little Redfish Lakes are identified in Annual Operating Instructions as off-limits to cattle but are frequently grazed during the season. Excess use also frequently occurs outside allotments in Grand Prize Gulch, East Pass Creek, Chamberlain Basin, and Washington and Fourth of July Lakes.

Riparian areas within the allotments have been grazed in excess of the FLRMP 30% utilization standard. Evidence of riparian impacts from over-utilization include hummocking, soil compaction, reduced riparian vegetation vigor and productivity, and altered plant species composition. Pasture rotations have been altered and seasons of use have been significantly shortened in order to meet riparian utilization standards, and the needs of Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed fish, however, FLRMP standards are still not being consistently met.

Habitat for three species of native salmonids listed for protection under the ESA occurs within the allotments, including Snake River chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and Columbia River bull trout (all threatened). These species currently occupy habitats within the allotments. Livestock grazing has compromised the integrity of these habitats within portions of the allotments. Livestock use habitually concentrates on streambanks, causing damage to soil, channel, and aquatic habitat features, and alters riparian communities.

FLRMP standards for use of riparian areas is 30%, yet monitoring data shows riparian use consistently exceeds this standard. Use by cattle along streamside areas on the East Fork allotments has resulted in considerable degradation of streambanks, particularly along the East Fork Salmon River, West Pass Creek, Big Lake Creek, Sullivan Creek, and French Creek, and in headwater tributaries of Big Boulder Creek, Little Boulder Creek, Wickiup Creek, Bowery Creek, and the ridges above the East Fork Salmon River. This degradation includes but is not limited to trampling and chiseling of streambanks, loss of vegetative cover, accelerated erosion, and reduced streambank storage. The capability and productivity of riparian and aquatic habitats within portions of the allotments, necessary to maintain viable populations of native fish, and promote recovery of ESA listed fish, have been noticeably reduced.

In spite of reductions in stocking rates over the past three years, monitoring data shows the East Fork allotments being stocked at a rate that exceeds utilization standards in some areas. This does not allow for development of residual vegetation (dry grass and other dead vegetation covering the soil surface; often referred to as "litter"), which is crucial to many wildlife species. In particular, livestock use of bighorn sheep winter forage (bluebunch wheatgrass) routinely exceeds 30% in Big Lake Creek (including Corral Creek) and Bluett Creek. Likewise, aspen stands, an important component for wildlife wintering areas, are in poor condition with regeneration and understory vigor hampered by livestock grazing. Utilization within riparian areas, also a key component of wildlife habitat, has exceeded FLRMP utilization standards. This has reduced residual vegetation available to riparian dependent species. To meet the intent of PL 92-400 and the management goals for wildlife, of both the Sawtooth and the Challis National FLRMPs, a change in livestock management is needed.

Under current grazing systems, livestock may graze in areas over 9000 feet elevation putting them into occupied or potential habitat for several Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate, or sensitive (TEPCS) plant species including slender moonwort, *Botrychium lineare*, a Candidate for listing under ESA. Unauthorized livestock use may be impacting the occupied habitat for this rare species. Impacts to potential habitat through trampling and congregation within these allotments may also be occurring.

White Cloud milkvetch, *Astragalus vexilliflexus* var. *nubilus*, a Region 4 sensitive species, is endemic to the White Cloud mountains and is found in high elevations, along ridge crests and exposed alpine talus slopes with sparse vegetation. All known populations globally occur within the Upper and Lower East Fork Allotments. Range monitoring has documented that 44% (4 of 9) of the populations are experiencing moderate to locally heavy livestock use (grazing, trampling, and loafing).

Other proposed Region 4 Sensitive species (Final list anticipated 2004), occur within the Upper and Lower East Fork allotment including northern sagewort, silvery/Jones' primrose, wedge-leaf saxifrage, pointed draba/rockcress draba, common moonwort, and Brewer's sedge. Range monitoring and botanical surveys have recorded evidence of moderate to high livestock impact, mostly through trampling or loafing within habitats for these species. Declines in population numbers and fecundity for Silvery/Jones primrose have been documented since 1998, making this the highest priority plant species for protection on the SNRA. To meet viability requirements for rare plant species under Forest Service Manual 2670, a change in livestock management is needed.

In addition to impacts for TEPCS plants in areas above 9000 feet, livestock use has been documented as negatively impacting the alpine ecosystem. Given the short growing season and infertile soils of such areas, vegetation can be rapidly altered by grazing animals. Range monitoring and botanical surveys have recorded evidence of moderate to high livestock impact, mostly through trampling or loafing within these fragile areas. To meet diversity requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA – Section 9500-4) and to reduce impacts to this fragile ecosystem, a change in livestock management is needed.

Livestock grazing is also affecting natural and potential vegetation groups throughout the Upper and Lower East Fork allotments. Whitebark pine is one of the most rapidly declining conifer species in North America. Cattle bedding and trailing may be impacting the seedling establishment of declining whitebark pine, especially on Railroad Ridge (Perkins 1997).

High elevation meadows are composed of extensive grass, sedge and herbaceous plant community types. Heavy grazing within meadows, seeps, and springs has been documented within within the allotments. Such impacts have resulted in the alteration of dominant vegetation types and conversion of species composition from native forage species to introduced grass and weedy species. Additionally, pedestal formation, soil compaction, and reduced plant vigor and productivity has been documented.

A Record of Decision to re-introduce the gray wolf into central Idaho was signed in July, 1994. On the SNRA, Decision Notices were issued for seven grazing allotments subsequent to the publication of the Final Rule for reintroduction of gray wolves. In addition, a Record of Decision for one SNRA grazing allotment was published during development of the recovery strategy. In a ruling issued on June 11, 2002, the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho determined that “[t]he Forest Service has violated the Organic Act by failing to consider whether grazing is ‘substantially impairing’ the wolf populations in the SNRA.” The Court also stated “[f]or those allotments that have had a NEPA analysis, the Forest Service must go back and conduct an analysis under the Organic Act.” Therefore, there is a

need to conduct an analysis under the Organic Act on those eight allotments as it pertains to the gray wolf.

Fish, wildlife, and riparian goals as described in the Sawtooth FLRMP include protecting and enhancing wildlife and fish habitat with an emphasis on protecting, managing, and improving riparian areas. The Challis FLRMP has similar goals for fish, wildlife, and riparian management. To meet the intent of PL 92-400 and the management goals for fish, wildlife, and riparian management of both the Sawtooth and the Challis FLRMPs, a change in livestock management is required. In response to conflicts with big game winter range, the revised Sawtooth FLRMP specifically states, "Big game requirements for space and forage have priority in the management of winter range used in common by livestock and big game."(WIST07) The revised Sawtooth FLRMP further states that: "Where rangeland facilities or practices have been identified as potentially contributing to the degradation of water quality, aquatic species or occupied sensitive or watch plant habitat, facilities and practices causing degradation should be considered for relocation, closure, or changes in management strategy, alteration, or discontinuance."(RAGU06) The AMPs need to be updated to comply with the Sawtooth and Challis FLRMPs, the intent of PL 92-400, and to bring livestock grazing into balance with other resource values on the allotment.

Conflicts between recreation and grazing use have been persistent at popular backcountry destinations. This has been particularly evident at Frog Lake, Little Redfish Lake, Quicksand Meadows, Railroad Ridge, Little Boulder Meadows, Baker Lake, East Fork dispersed camping area, West Pass Hot Springs, and West Pass Creek. At times, cattle occupy dispersed recreation sites, keeping people from comfortably enjoying them.

Other impacts include damage from cattle frequenting recreation sites, alteration of the natural-appearing landscape, livestock droppings and associated smell. There is an extensive and heavily used recreational trail system within the allotments. Cattle often use the recreation trails to move between foraging areas and, when they concentrate in one area for a long period, cause considerable damage to the trail tread and drainage structures. This has resulted in increased erosion, braided trails, and negatively affected the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

The FLRMP has several goals and objectives regarding recreation use including managing the land and its resources to provide a variety of quality outdoor recreation experiences. It is anticipated that recreation use in this area will continue to increase, further magnifying this need. To meet the intent of PL 92-400 and the management goals for recreation of both the Sawtooth and the Challis FLRMP, a change in livestock management is required.

The current allotment management plans do not comply with FLRMP direction for recreation, listed species, soil, water and aquatic resources, wildlife and botanical resources. Under PL 92-400, livestock grazing is recognized as a valid use so long as it does not cause substantial impairment of the SNRA key values. The current grazing system needs to be changed to comply with the Sawtooth and Challis FLRMPs and to meet the intent of PL92-400.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to authorize grazing; to update the AMPs to incorporate FLRMP standards and guides and terms of the Biological Opinions (BOs); and to allow for permitted livestock grazing that meets or moves toward desired resource conditions. An adaptive management strategy, which would allow for flexibility during the implementation of the grazing strategy, would allow permittees to respond to changing conditions and unexpected results. Permitted numbers and seasons would be modified as necessary to meet standards, based on monitoring results of the previous season. More specifically, the Sawtooth NF proposed action to manage the allotments is described in Alternative 2, Chapter 2, page II-8 of the FEIS.

Decision Framework

Given the purpose and need, the deciding official (Area Ranger) will review the proposed action and alternatives, and the environmental consequences in order to make the following decisions on the Upper & Lower East Fork C & H Allotments:

1. Should livestock grazing continue to be authorized on either or both of the allotments, and if so under what conditions?
2. One of the primary considerations in determining whether or not to authorize livestock grazing is a determination of substantial impairment. In accordance with 36 CFR 292.17 (b) (10), it defines substantial impairment as "that level of disturbance of the values of the SNRA which is incompatible with the standards of the General Management Plan." Therefore the Area Ranger must also decide if the primary SNRA values will be substantially impaired by livestock grazing in the Upper & Lower East Fork Allotments.

Section 40 CFR 1508.25 of the NEPA implementing regulations provided guidance for the interdisciplinary team in determining proper scope of the analysis. The proposed action is limited to the revision of Allotment Management Plans and connected structural improvements. If livestock grazing is authorized, the decision will include specific elements of the AMPs; the actual AMPs will be developed following and based on the decision.

The area being analyzed was determined to be suitable for livestock grazing through the Forest Planning process and will not be discussed in this analysis. (See Sawtooth FLRMP – 2003) Nor will this analysis discuss who will hold grazing permits, as that decision is determined through administrative processes.

Public Involvement

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) defines scoping as "...an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (40 CFR 1501.7). Among other things, the scoping process is used to invite public participation, to help identify public issues, and to obtain

public comment at various stages of the analysis process. Although scoping is to begin early, it is really an iterative process that continues until a decision is made.

As part of the public involvement process, the agency initiated the scoping process to identify members of the public who could be affected by or would be interested in the proposed action. A list of individuals, groups, organizations and agencies were notified of the proposal and invited to comment. SNRA staff also reviewed the proposal and submitted comments and raised issues.

A scoping letter dated January 10, 1997, was sent to the permit holders and to interested public that an Environmental Analysis (EA) would be prepared. News releases with this same information were published in the Challis Messenger, Wood River Journal, and Twin Falls Times News in this same period. Public comments were accepted through March 15, 1997 and a total of 17 letters from the public was received. A copy of all letters and comments from individuals and organizations are on file in the project record.

Public comments were analyzed to determine significant issues for their analysis. In March 1999, it was decided that work on the Upper and Lower East Fork Allotment EAs would be delayed a year to gather additional data during the field season. This data would allow the Interdisciplinary (ID) team to make more informed decisions and would also allow them to determine if all important issues had been addressed.

In a letter dated January 25, 2001, the SNRA again requested public input for the Upper and Lower East Fork Allotment EA. Reasons for additional scoping included both the length of time since the initial scoping as well as the ESA-listing of bull trout and lynx. The letter described the project and requested feedback. News releases with the same information were published in the Idaho Mountain Express and the Challis Messenger at that time. Public comments were accepted through March 1, 2001. A total of 79 responses were received from this second round of public scoping. (Project Record) From the comments received during the 2001 scoping period, the ID team determined that the issues formulated in 1997 still applied to the allotments in 2001.

Because of the complexity of the issues and based on the scoping, it was determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was the correct analysis document to prepare and not an EA. The Notice of Intent (NOI) to initiate an EIS was published in the Federal Register on August 22, 2002. The NOI asked for public comment on the proposal to be received by September 21, 2002. Six responses were received from publication of the NOI.

The DEIS for this project was released on April 7, 2003 and included a 45 day comment period. A total of 212 comments on the DEIS were received during the formal comment period and an additional 12 comments were received after the comment period closed. This project has also been listed in the Sawtooth Forest quarterly "Schedule of Proposed Actions" which has been sent to 249 individuals, agencies and organizations, since 1997.

Issues

The Forest Service separated the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant issues. Significant issues were defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. Following, are the list of Significant Issues.

Issue. Livestock Distribution and Management: The allotments may not be capable of supporting grazing under the current grazing system.

Many commentors concurred with monitoring results that have shown both allotments may be overstocked, based on the recurring need to shorten the grazing season to meet utilization standards for riparian areas. Despite herding efforts, livestock use is concentrated in riparian areas with minimal use of upland vegetation.

Due to the remote, forested, steep and dissected terrain of these allotments, controlling livestock has been a chronic problem. Livestock drift off the allotments or into rested pastures. Effective removal of all livestock after the grazing season has also been a challenge.

Others felt that with increased flexibility in management and additional range improvements, that utilization levels could be met and livestock drift prevented.

Issue. Plant Diversity: Current livestock use may be affecting vegetative health, vigor, and diversity of upland and riparian vegetation types, as well as Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate, or sensitive plant species.

Many commentors concurred that heavy grazing along streamsides and within meadows, seeps, and springs has resulted in the alteration of dominant vegetation types and conversion of species composition to introduced grass and weedy species. Increased herding of cattle from riparian areas to uplands, including alpine, subalpine and whitebark pine habitats may result in impacts to natural and potential vegetation groups and TEPCS and rare or unique plant communities in areas marginally capable of sustaining grazing.

Other commentors however felt that livestock grazing benefits upland vegetation by improving plant vigor and nutritional value.

Issue. Fisheries and Hydrology: Livestock grazing may be affecting functional integrity of hydrologic processes.

Concerns were raised that current and proposed grazing may be disturbing the functional integrity of hydrologic processes, including riparian and aquatic habitats on the East Fork Salmon River, its major tributaries, and perennial headwaters and connected wet meadows seeps and springs. Disturbance factors include streambank trampling and shearing, overuse of hydric vegetation, and associated degradation of riparian, soil, and plant communities. These effects may impact key habitats of threatened chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout, and sensitive westslope cutthroat trout. Direct effects to spawning and incubation of these fish species may also be occurring.

Others however felt that streambank trampling and shearing, overuse of hydric vegetation and associated degradation of riparian communities was a result of large elk and/or moose populations within the allotments.

Issue. Wildlife: Livestock grazing may be affecting Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate, or Sensitive species recovery, wolf recovery efforts, or habitat recovery efforts for game and non-game species.

Many commentors agreed that livestock grazing may be affecting wildlife species abundance and distribution through-out the allotment. One of the primary focuses of the comments was that forage utilization by livestock has impacted key bighorn, elk and deer winter ranges by reducing forage, hiding or thermal cover otherwise available to big game species.

Others however noted that big game populations are not declining, indicating that livestock is not reducing forage, hiding or thermal cover to an unacceptable level.

Concerns were expressed that livestock grazing may be directly or indirectly impacting numerous groups of non-game wildlife species (neotropical migrant birds, small mammals, predators, insect pollinators, species associated with aspen forests, species associated with healthy wet meadows or other riparian habitats, such as spotted frogs) within the allotments. Direct mortality to some species may occur through the trampling of eggs or young. Excess trampling may also impact ground nesting bees, thus affecting progeny. Further, non-game wildlife species may be affected by removing forage, hiding or thermal cover otherwise available.

Commentors strongly expressed concerns that cattle grazing may be impacting wolf recovery because wolf recovery guidelines call for instances of lethal control to wolves, if cattle are preyed upon by wolves.

Others however noted that no depredation of livestock or lethal control of wolves has occurred on the two allotments. They contend that despite lethal control activities elsewhere on the SNRA, wolf populations continue to increase and therefore livestock grazing is not impacting recovery.

Issue. Recreation and Aesthetic Values: Livestock grazing may be affecting recreation experiences.

Numerous concerns were raised that cattle are impacting recreation values by damaging Forest Service system trails and favored camping areas, and displacing users to areas where cattle are not concentrated. The inability to keep livestock within the allotment boundary has resulted in excess use. Livestock may be impacting recreational experiences through their presence in and around occupied campsites, the presence of cow manure in campsites and on trails, trailing and trampling effects on trails, campsites, and meadows and odor.

Others were concerned that cattle were being blamed for resource damage that was caused by recreationists and off-road vehicle use.

Issue. Social and Economic Consequences: Changes in livestock grazing may have economic effects to permittees, while some livestock grazing strategies may not be cost effective to the federal government.

Costs associated with mitigation (e.g. meeting requirements for stubble height or allowable use), remote access, and implementing consultation requirements for Threatened, Endangered, or Proposed species (e.g. stream access restrictions) may be so costly, that permittees do not have the ability to economically operate in the area.

Potential changes to grazing management may have an effect on the economic viability of ranching. The social/economic value of maintaining ranching is important to current permittees. Ranching and livestock grazing are primary sources of income to the county.

Administrative costs to the Forest Service concerned with extensive field inspections, monitoring, conflict resolution and investment in range structures may not be cost effective compared to the value of livestock grazing outputs.

Non Significant Issues

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations explain this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, "...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)..."

Non-Significant Issues were grouped by the following Categories:

Category 1 - Issues beyond the scope of the proposed action, conjecture, or not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

Category 2 - Issues addressed by FLRMP Standards and Guidelines or other higher level decision.

Category 3 - Issues addressed with mitigation measures or design features common to all alternatives.

Category 4 - Issues addressed by measuring the effects of different alternatives, and comparing/contrasting the differences. (Effects Analysis)

A complete list of non-significant issues and rationale for such may be found in the project record. It is worthwhile highlighting two such issues however. Both Heritage Resources and Noxious Weeds were assigned to Category 3 & 4, and will be discussed in Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and in Chapter 4 – Effects.

Other Related Efforts

SNRA Organic Act and the FLRMP

On August 22, 1972, Congress passed Public Law 92-400 (PL 92-400) establishing the SNRA. The intent of establishing the SNRA was to protect the area's primary values of

scenic, natural, historic, pastoral, and fish and wildlife values, and to provide for the enhancement of recreation attributes.

In light of PL 92-400, the Sawtooth FLRMP identified the desired future condition for the SNRA: ensuring the preservation and protection of the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral and fish and wildlife values and providing for the enhancement of associated recreational values. The Sawtooth FLRMP also provides the following management objectives specifically for the SNRA regarding this proposed action:

- Protect and monitor the existing high quality of air and water. (SNOB01, III-79)
- Protect habitat for salmon and other fisheries. (SNOB02, III-79)
- Provide for consumptive uses of resources including removal of trees, grazing and extraction of minerals so long as these uses do not substantially impair the recreational and associated values for which the recreation area was established. (SNOB04, III-80)
- People visiting the SNRA will find a variety of outstanding opportunities for the use and enjoyment of this congressionally designated area. These opportunities range from enjoying the Area's scenic beauty along major travel corridors, to motorized recreation activities, to primitive recreation in undeveloped and wilderness areas. The SNRA is managed as "showcase of National Forest management" for quality recreation and all resources, services and facilities. (Desired Condition, revised Sawtooth NF FLRMP, III-79)

In addition to Forest-wide Goals, Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines that provide direction for all management areas, the following direction has been developed specifically for management areas within the SNRA, which includes the entire East Fork allotment project area(Management Area 3)

MPC/Resource Area	Direction	Number	Management Direction Description
Sawtooth NRA General Management	Standard	0301	Manage both federal and private lands to ensure the preservation and protection of the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, and fish and wildlife values and to provide for the enhancement of the associated recreational values in accordance with Public Law 92-400.

MPC/Resource Area	Direction	Number	Management Direction Description
	Standard	0302	Management, utilization, and disposal of natural resources on federally owned lands (such as timber, grazing, and mineral resources) shall be allowed only insofar as their utilization does not substantially impair achievement of the purposes for which the recreation area was established. "Substantial Impairment" is defined as that level of disturbance of the values of the SNRA that is incompatible with the standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan (contained in this document). The proposed activities shall be evaluated as to: 1) the period of impact; 2) the area affected; and 3) the importance of the impact on the SNRA values. Use process guidance in Appendix I to assist in determining compliance with this standard.