

**2008 Fish Creek, Trail Creek, Hurst Canyon,  
North Fork and Park Creek S&G  
End of Season Report**

**Actual Use Dates:**

Allotment	Date on National Forest	Date off National Forest	Number of Ewes	Number of Lambs
Trail Creek	7/03	7/28	782	1100
Trail Creek (Trailing to Hurst Canyon)	8/04	8/06	1130	0
Hurst Canyon	8/07	9/14	1130	0
Trail Creek	9/15	9/19	1130	0
Fish Creek	7/17	7/24	850	1000
Park Creek	6/26	6/30	908	1419
Park Creek	7/01	7/01	1164	0
Trailing to North Fork	7/02	7/02	1164	0
North Fork	7/03	7/30	1164	0
Trailing to Park Creek	7/31	7/31	1164	0
Park Creek	8/01	8/09	1164	0

Allotment	Permitted Head Months	Actual Use Head Months
Fish Creek	3156	225
Trail Creek	2525	965
Hurst Canyon	4374	1449
Park Creek	1775	524
North Fork	3252	1072
Trailing between Park Creek and North Fork		77

The precipitation information for the District is included in the table below. While this information is collected at the office in Mackay and is not specific to your allotment areas, it does give a good idea of the available moisture on the District. The totals for 2008 are compared to the average total precipitation by month for Mackay from the Desert Research Institute website for 1931-2005. Low precipitation levels and a late summer with cooler temperatures caused vegetation to mature later than usual this year. This helped in preventing upland vegetation from drying out early but slowed grass production on early units.

Month	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Total
Precipitation (in inches)	2.26	0.28	0.78	0.11	0.39	0.47	0.00	1.01	0.18	0.55	6.03
Average Precipitation 1931-2005	0.78	0.60	0.61	0.68	1.09	1.34	0.93	0.80	0.67	0.57	8.07

The cooler conditions made woody browse utilization patterns more consistent with past use levels than those seen in the 2007 grazing season. This lighter use was seen across the district as a whole. A browse standard of 50% is included in your permit and should be watched carefully in the future. While this standard has not been focused on by range specialists in the past because minimal use of woody browse by livestock was observed, browse on willows, aspen, and riparian shrubs is an important consideration especially in hot, dry years. Using this tool to adjust movement dates could avoid overuse or missing end of season standards for herbaceous and woody species in these riparian areas during drought years.

Prior to the 2008 grazing season, several meetings were completed to discuss bighorn sheep and domestic sheep issues within the region. These meetings included personnel from the Sawtooth National Forest, Salmon Challis National Forest, Idaho Fish and Game and Lava Lake Land and Livestock, LLC. The product of these meetings and discussions was the development of an Interim Strategy for Separation of Bighorn and Domestic Sheep for Lava Lake Land and Livestock, LLC and Muldoon Grazing Association, Inc. Within this strategy, clear parameters were put in place to reduce the likelihood of interaction between wild and domestic sheep and a multi-level communication plan was agreed upon to document and manage potential bighorn sheep sightings within domestic sheep allotments as a multi-agency collaboration.

### **Fish Creek, Trail Creek, and Hurst Canyon**

Fish Creek, Trail Creek and/or Hurst Canyon allotments were visited on 07/08, 07/09, 07/15, 07/16, 07/17, 07/23, 08/14 and 08/28. These inspections included livestock placement checks, rangeland inventory and monitoring, forage utilization, herder's camp compliance checks and field reviews with permittees.

Only one report of cattle on sheep allotments was received this season, which is a marked improvement. Please continue to communicate with Leadbelt and BLM permittees to reduce conflicts along allotment and federal/private boundaries. There were several reports of a sheep band from another permittee in the area not following an appropriate trailing schedule and route and this information will be used to better define these parameters in the future and take action if necessary. Since a continuous boundary fence does not exist between cattle and sheep allotments, some conflict along this boundary is expected. Options are being considered and recommendations from permittees are encouraged to reduce this conflict. Any new improvements require written analysis and clearance prior to implementation and there is not a timeline for completion of such documentation.

Information about wolves in the area was not adequately provided to us and therefore we were unable to relay the information to permittees in the area. Conflicts on private property in Fish Creek were reported in June however we received the information after Wildlife Services were already brought in to take action. Should this information be provided to us in a timely manner, we will relay it to all permittees in the area.

A report of a single wolf in Horsethief Creek was provided by a wildlife technician in mid July, and this information was provided to the permittees in the area. No reports of livestock being harassed were documented. However, cattle did not want to stay in the drainage during their scheduled time in August which would suggest that the wolf was still in the area. No livestock loss was reported in the area from predation.

Long term monitoring was completed on these allotments in 2008 for documentation associated with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA process and analysis are in the early stages and if you have any questions or input, please contact your rangeland management specialist or district ranger for more information. Most documentation for these allotments was in the form of photos of uplands, aspen, herder camps, and written accounts of what was seen, however one greenline was completed in Long Canyon and several aspen assessments were completed in Hurst Canyon and Fish Creek allotments. Two greenlines were re-read in 2006; one in Trail Creek and one in Fish Creek and these are scheduled for another re-read in 2010 should time and funding allow.

### **North Fork and Park Creek**

This season went very well. There were some adjustments made to the original grazing strategy due to wolves, with pups, denning on the Sawtooth National Forest allotment that was to be used in June and July. Communication between Lava Lake and the District was good and adjustments were made as necessary. There was some wolf activity in the North Fork. Lava Lake put out a night watch and bedded the sheep using fladry. This has worked very well to minimize livestock losses. There were 2 field reviews this season, one on July 21<sup>st</sup> and the other on September 8<sup>th</sup>. The July review was to discuss bed ground sites that have been used and selecting sites for the last few days on the way out of the North Fork Allotment. The sites that had been selected and used were all very well thought out sites. It is important that the same site isn't used every year. The September review was to look at the results of the 2008 grazing season. Everything looked very good. Lava Lake L&L has done a great job of being flexible and responsive in their management to accommodate the rangeland resource. With the increasing concern of contact between domestic and bighorn sheep it is important that the herd is kept together and no strays are left. Annually revisiting and using The Strategy for Managing Separation between Bighorn Sheep and Domestic Sheep, gives direction and will ensure that risk of contact is at a minimum. This strategy was developed with Lava Lake L&L, Idaho Fish and Game, and the Salmon-Challis and Sawtooth National Forests.

This season there was data collected on the North Fork and Park Creek S&G Allotments for future analysis of these allotments. Greenline data has been re-read on 3 sites within the 2 allotments and improvement has been seen in 2 of the sites with maintenance of one site that is in excellent condition. The greenline data is listed below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Greenlines</b>	<b>GL status</b>	<b>Stability</b>	<b>Trend</b>
2002	Squibb Canyon (North Fork)	32.2 Early	5.82 Moderate	
2008	Squibb Canyon (North Fork)	67.1 Late	6.95 Moderate	Up
2002	Park Canyon Creek (North Fork)	27.6 Early	5.97 Moderate	
2006	Park Canyon Creek (North Fork)	64.1 Late	7.43 High	Up
2002	Upper Summit Creek (Park Creek)	110.0 PNC	8.54 High	
2008	Upper Summit Creek (Park Creek)	111.0 PNC	8.81 High	Static

The Forest Service will continue monitoring and inventory work in 2009 for the purpose of completing NEPA documentation on your sheep allotments in the coming years. If you have any questions or comments on the information we are planning to collect to complete this analysis, please contact your range specialist or the district ranger.