

**Deputy Team Field Review**  
**Wallowa Whitman NF and BLM Baker Field Office**  
**Oct 6-9, 2008**

**Field Review Team Members**

If you have comments or questions, please contact: Dorothy Mason,  
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**Review Team Members:**

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**Other Participants:**

Bob Rock	FS Baker City
Gene Yates	FS Baker City
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Sue Badgley	BLM Baker City
John Rademacher	BLM Baker City
Kevin McCoy	BLM Baker City
Denine Schmitz	BLM Baker City
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Rob Gump	FS Enterprise
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## **General Field Review Objectives**

1. Determine if the Biological Opinions have been implemented in accordance with the mechanisms, terms and conditions.
2. Determine if on-the-ground management decisions are consistent with the Biological Opinions, and PACFISH and INFISH Goals and Objectives.
3. Determine if PACFISH and INFISH Standards and Guides have been correctly interpreted and implemented on the ground.
4. Determine if grazing implementation monitoring activities have been evaluated to eliminate duplication between the PACFISH/INFISH Grazing Implementation Monitoring Module and other grazing implementation monitoring activities.
5. Improve communication and coordination between agencies. Strengthen interagency commitment to watershed management under the management direction of PACFISH/INFISH.

## **FINDINGS**

### **GENERAL COMMENDATIONS**

We commend both units' plans to conduct all required IM and reporting targeted for FY08.

Both units demonstrated a strong commitment to partnerships.

There are good working relationships among and between Level 1 and Level 2 teams.

The units did a very good and timely job of responding to the homework requirements.

The logistics of the review and appropriateness of sights chosen including the DMAs were excellent.

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:**

There is confusion with the evolving PIBO IM methodologies for all agencies that participated (e.g., change from prior year sample scheme to the current year sample scheme).

There is also confusion regarding the link between, and the benefits of, PIBO IM and PIBO EM.

Both agencies discussed higher priority work conflicts (e.g., Range NEPA, permit administration and litigation).

A common theme expressed was, "we're understaffed, under funded, and we keep losing the field staff that do this kind of work".

### **GENERAL RECOMMENDATION:**

The units should read the direction letters and attend the EM meeting each year. The EM team makes excellent efforts to make early contact to set up these meetings and they come to the field unit. Field folks must work with the EM field team when they come out.

The IM Team should clarify IM Annual Directives regarding the sample schedule (e.g., 10% vs. 20%, DMA criteria which have to be monitored).

The IM Team should clarify the relationship between PIBO IM and PIBO EM. The IM Team should clarify the long-term utility and importance of using this data for management decisions.

The IM Team should consider developing a short course for line managers to illustrate the benefits and requirements of PIBO monitoring in relation to short- and long-term management decisions.

The short course would assist line officers in communicating to their staff how the PIBO monitoring relates to other Forest and District monitoring, and provide perspective and understanding as they make prioritization decisions.

The Deputy Team should encourage open communications between the field units and the region/state office representatives to assist in implementation of PIBO.

Complete the connection between INFRA and the grazing module database, to eliminate redundancy in recording year end data.

The IM Team should evaluate the usefulness of monitoring and entering PIBO DMA data where effectiveness monitoring is not collected.

The IM team should review the consistency of the various protocols (e.g., bank stability in MIM and the EM) and report back to the Deputy Team with a recommendation.

## **PROJECT COMMENDATIONS, OBSERVATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Sprinkle Stewardship Timber Sale:**

#### Commendation-

Line officer involvement was evident. District and SO staffs were involved from a technical aspect. It was evident the stewardship project as a whole, was a positive project that met objectives.

#### Observation-

It was unclear from the discussions, how the unit used PIBO in designing this project. Some discussion suggested there was a problem with PIBO's application but no specific evidence was provided, nor did we look at the untreated RHCA to evaluate the issues.

#### Recommendations-

The presentation might have addressed about how this sale related to PIBO Stds/Guides. The stop might also have addressed how livestock grazing could be affected. For example, treating timber in the upland opens up the stand, which may draw cattle away from the RHCA, helping reduce use in the RHCA.

Visiting the untreated RHCA, the culvert replacement, or the road treatment proposals could also have been used to illustrate the link to PIBO standards and guidelines.

### **Sugar RHCA Commercial Treatment (livestock discussion)**

#### Commendations-

The group appreciated and welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issue of treatment in RHCA's on intermittent streams. The team also appreciated the discussion with Aric Johnson, the range conservationist who talked frankly about questions the field wrestles with in relation to the monitoring requirements of local BO's.

The team appreciated Mitch Bulthuis discussing pointedly some of the communication challenges between FS program staff (including between the SO and the districts) and the interagency level one team.

#### Observations-

It's apparent that the field was not clear on how to distinguish between the local (e.g. Forest Plan/Project) monitoring requirements and what is required by the PIBO monitoring module.

This project was presented as meeting the objective of treating timber for preventing the addition of sediment in the long term. It was not clear to team members how the proposed treatment would meet the objective of reducing sediment input.

A comment was made to the group that treating timber within the RHCA could also add value to this sale thus balancing the needs of the local community and providing for aquatic health.

An issue was brought up about whether RMO's (and PACFISH/INFISH) apply to "non-fish bearing" streams. A 2005 e-mail from the RO was provided suggesting this is not appropriate.

Timber activity in the RHCA that removes down large wood may cause additional impacts to the RHCA from potential increased grazing access.

#### Recommendations-

### **Sugar RHCA Commercial Treatment (livestock discussion)**

The forest and the level one team are encouraged to fully discuss the issues of RHCA treatment to clarify the process of documentation needed to accomplish the project.

Staff assessments and evaluations should be well documented as requested by the level 1 team before elevation is considered.

The discussion paper, provided by A. Johnson, is acknowledged and the receipt of the issues presented in this paper should proceed through discussions with the level 1 team first. If the issues cannot be resolved, then they should be presented to the level 2 team using the established elevation process.

**Sugar RHCA Commercial Treatment** There can be appropriate treatments within the RHCA, but the analysis must demonstrate that the project will enhance RMO objectives in the long term. The team encourages the unit to utilize the Level 1 team to facilitate this process.

The PACFISH ROD at pages C-5 and C-6 indicates that RMOs apply to all streams (including non-fish bearing streams) within defined RHCAs in all watersheds with listed fish. The 2006 e-mail interpretation is inconsistent with PACFISH/INFISH and the Biological Opinions.

**Minam:**

Commendations-

It was great to see the well qualified BLM river staff and the excellent interdisciplinary approach to monitoring. This is clearly facilitated by the regular field review trips that the district staff does with the river staff.

It was good to hear about integration of work between the other agencies (FS, BLM, and State) when it came to coordination of management to accomplish a program of work in an efficient and effective manner. Adoption of uniform standards and regulations, with coordinated enforcement, is an exemplary model.

Observations-

Interdisciplinary training seems to be effective for the river staff (weed ID training, utilization training, etc.).

It was good to hear about the documentation process used to notify interdisciplinary programs, but would like to see what kind of format is used, Since it could be an example for other programs.

Recommendations-

Continue to monitor this site, 2 of 5 years as called for by PIBO.

The experienced river rangers implementing this program are clearly doing an outstanding job. The unit should perhaps be seasoning a new generation of river rangers to learn the institutional knowledge and maintain the fine traditions of this program.

**Wallupa:**

Commendations-

The review team appreciated the openness of district staff in presenting the issues they struggle with at this DMA site. This is exactly one of the objectives of the Deputy Team reviews - to clear up such questions.

Observations/Recommendations-

Continuation of DMA's without intensive grazing has value but simplifying and streamlining of the protocol is needed. The IM Team will develop consist methods for streamlining this protocol, when no apparent livestock use is evident. There is a need to

report minimal to no grazing use, and the IM Team will visit this issue this winter for resolution.

We recognize the importance of IM to the overall value of PIBO. We are aware the workload to accomplish all of the IM may still be a problem across the basin.

**Mud Creek:**

Commendations-

The review team commends the district's vision and perseverance in dealing with this difficult situation (trespass road construction in a Category 1 Stream), eventually effecting a remedial road obliteration that conserves key high-quality aquatic resources. The review team commends the extra effort from NOAA fisheries and FWS in responding to a tight timeline for consultation.

Recommendations-

Continue to respond creatively in dealing with difficult unexpected situations to achieve PIBO objectives. As much as possible, plan your crises further in advance and bring the consulting agencies into the response as early as possible.

**Grande Ronde Mallory DMA:**

Commendations-

The audit went smoothly and quickly. The district was prepared and clearly understood DMA protocols and requirements.

The district has made a commendable effort in mitigating the historical damage to this site by constructing an enclosure to recover the stream bank above the willows along the greenline.

Observations-

During the audit it became evident to the team that there is some confusion about where the "electronic report" referred to in the DMA audit form comes from. Also the verbiage in the annual directive that identified this site as a site to collect IM in both 2008 and 2007 was unclear to the unit. The unit should have also noted that it was to have also been monitored in 2007, to provide the 2 years of data required.

It appears that there is some duplication for recording monitoring data in required data bases.

Recommendations-

The annual IM directive needs to have clearer verbiage when it comes to identifying the sampling schedule to eliminate a misunderstanding by the field.

The FS is actively working on eliminating the duplicate data entry requirement (INFRA and PIBO IM Module)

**Grouse Creek:**

Commendations-

The BLM has done a credible job of maximizing fish passage at a culvert that was suboptimally placed during an emergency road repair by the county.

Observations-

The replacement culvert, while apparently large enough for the site, was clearly placed at too high an elevation, especially at the downstream end. Consequently it is “perched” resulting in deposition upstream and scour of all but the coarsest substrate downstream.

The resulting drop-off and high gradient at the downstream end of the culvert, in combination with the coarse substrate and consequent loss of surface flow during low flow periods, results in loss of fish passage, especially for juveniles, during some periods.

Recommendations-

Be prepared to engage the local agencies quickly and effectively when these emergency repair situations occur to provide technical assistance. The placement was not the best, so be prepared to provide technical assistance to local and state agencies in a disaster situation when it comes to a fix to aquatic structures in essential habitat.

Both FS and NOAA have standing engineering guidance for roads, bridges and culverts. Local entities should be provided these technical resources ahead of time, along with a formal or informal agreement regarding communications during emergency road repairs. The FS has provided the counties in NE Oregon standards for engineering on roads. BLM should consider doing the same.

**Bear Creek:**

Commendations/Observations-

This land acquisition was an excellent effort to move important fish habitat into public ownership.

-Mark Porter’s (Wallowa Resources) talk about noxious weeds was very informative and knowledgeable with regard to what this non-profit organization has accomplished in weed treatments since 2000. He demonstrated the benefits of partnerships through “early detection, rapid response and continuous monitoring”. He also emphasized the need for the district to complete their EIS for Invasive Species control, since completion of this document will give the agencies more effective tools for noxious weed control. BLM has made a good effort in noxious weed control through this partnership.

Recommendations-

Ensure that aquatic objectives are identified and implemented through the RMP for this new parcel of land.

Address the invasive species issue on newly acquired parcel in conjunction with achieving the aquatic objectives.

**McAlister Creek:**

Commendations-

We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts the district is taking in their planning process to address the impacts of the road that goes through the riparian area. (proactive approach with the Sled Springs EA process... )

It was good to hear that the forest intends to hire an enforcement officer to enforce road closures.

#### Observations-

It appears that through the planning process, the forest intends to reduce stream crossings, establish a 156 mile OHV trail system in the Sled Sp. Area. The review team assumes that all closed roads will be storm-proofed to prevent sediment delivery to RCHA's.

Abundant evidence of unauthorized cattle use was observed, along with resulting streambank alteration.

The potential for establishing a DMA here is viable if the road crossing and trail location are moved along with eliminating the dispersed camping.

There was no obvious evidence of sheep use here. It is unclear why the filed is monitoring this site as a sheep DMA, when the only apparent livestock use was trespass cattle.

The review team anticipates that the proposed trail realignment and bridge will enhance implementation of RM2 by discouraging dispersed camping within the RHCA.

The review team would have liked to see the DMA for this pasture where implementation monitoring is occurring.

#### Recommendations-

Address the unauthorized cattle use. We recommend the district address the reoccurring trespass or unauthorized use problem through administrative procedures, if possible. If not, then perhaps pursue a cooperative agreement with the adjacent landowner if that is where the unauthorized cattle are coming from (this would need to be determined first).

We realize the challenge with other priority work here, so perhaps partner with other specialists and users (ATV clubs) to help with this compliance issue.

#### **McCubbin Creek DMA:**

##### Commendations-

We appreciate the example provided by the district to take the team to this location that has some resource issues and questions about PIBO monitoring they will be dealing with in the Westside Rangeland Analysis EIS.

##### Observations-

The location of two DMA's within 1,000 meters creates more monitoring work.

The district requested our advice about the location of the lower DMA.

The review team has some concerns from what they observed at the lower DMA site, with current streambank conditions that were not consistent with GM-1 and exceeded the trigger values set by the unit to remove cattle from the pasture.

Recommendations-

We concur with the immediate removal of livestock from this pasture.

At a minimum, maintain the upper PIBO DMA site for IM monitoring protocol, while using the lower DMA site for within-season compliance monitoring if feasible.

### **Burnt Creek DMA:**

Commendations-

We appreciate the example provided by the district to take the team to this location that has some resource issues and questions about PIBO monitoring that they will be dealing with in the Westside Rangeland Analysis EIS.

Observations-

The range staff discussed the relative merits of greenline versus terrace in stubble heights in determining appropriate move triggers.

Recommendations-

We encourage the continued use of both greenline and terrace stubble heights for in season move triggers and greenline should be reported into the IM module.

The district may want to examine closely whether the appropriate key species are being monitored (bluegrass versus bunchgrass) to insure use as within-season move triggers and end-of-season compliance indicators.

### **Recommendations for the Deputy Team**

#### **Deputy Team assistance is requested to insure:**

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