

**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** January 23, 2004

Dear Interested Citizen:

We have completed an environmental analysis (EA) for the revision of livestock grazing Allotment Management Plans (AMPS) and the re-authorization of grazing permits for the following grazing allotments located in the St. Maries river basin: Catspur allotment, Charlie Creek allotment, Emerald Creek Cooperative allotment, Keeler Creek allotment, and Merry Creek Cooperative allotment.

The St. Maries Grazing Allotment EA was first presented for public comment on December 28, 1999. The comment period closed on February 1, 2000 and responses to those comments received were compiled. In the time that has passed, concerns were brought forth regarding some aspects of the EA. The foremost among these concerns was the applicability and necessity of some of the monitoring put forth in the EA. Additionally, in informal discussions, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service voiced a desire to see additional monitoring results before consulting on the biological assessments.

Changes to the EA in addition to the monitoring plan include; removal of items better covered in allotment management plans, inclusion of data from monitoring and surveys, rewording of the purpose and need statement and therefore slight changes in decision to be made, and a re-determination of major issues.

A copy of the EA is enclosed for your review. Three alternatives were considered in the assessment: Alternative A (Grazing with Current Practices), Alternative B (Grazing under Modified Terms and Conditions), and Alternative C (No Grazing). The alternatives are described in detail in Chapter Two of the Environmental Assessment.

For those who commented on the EA during the first comment period in 2000, your previously submitted comments will be admitted without the need to resubmit them. If you have additional comments please follow direction indicated in this letter.

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, Alternative B is being considered for implementation because it fully meets the purpose and need for the proposal and addresses the issues considered in the analysis. However, a decision will not be made until after comments have been received and reviewed.

Comments on this EA are requested from you. The Responsible Official, Charles A. Mark, District Ranger, will consider all public comments before making a decision. Submission of comments should meet the following requirements. In submitting comments, please provide specific facts along with supporting reasons that you believe should be considered by the Responsible Official in reaching a decision.

Comments may be submitted in writing, orally, or through electronic means. Appeal rights will be covered by 36 CFR 215 prior to June 4, 2003. In order to retain your administrative appeal rights you must provide written, oral, or electronic comments during the 30-day comment period. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered, however, those who submit anonymous comments may not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215. Additionally, any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality. When the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

Send written comments to:

Charles A. Mark, District Ranger  
St. Maries Grazing Allotments  
St. Joe Ranger District  
P.O. Box 407  
St. Maries, ID 83861

Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, faxed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the 30<sup>th</sup> calendar day following publication of the legal notice in the newspaper of record (Spokesman Review). The anticipated date of publication is 1/27/2004. Hand delivered comments must be time and date imprinted at the correct Responsible Official's office by the close of business on the 30<sup>th</sup> calendar day following publication of the legal notice. St. Maries office business hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4 pm.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone or in person, or if during non-business hours, must be at an official agency function (such as a public meeting), which is designed to elicit public comment.

Electronic comments may be submitted to [comments-northern-idpanhandle-stjoe@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-idpanhandle-stjoe@fs.fed.us). The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

I appreciate your interest in the St. Maries Grazing Allotment project. If you should have questions about this document or procedures for commenting, please don't hesitate to contact me personally here in our St. Maries office (phone 208-245-2531). Thank you for taking the time to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment.

Sincerely,

ERVIN J. BROOKS  
Acting District Ranger

Enclosure