

Big Sheep 2021 End of Year Report

NMFS BO No: WCR-2017-7355

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Wallowa Valley Ranger District

04 March 2022

Introduction: The purpose of this report is to satisfy Terms and Conditions set forth in the Biological Opinion from NMFS, WCR-2017-7355. This report answers directly to each Term and Condition.

Terms and Conditions

- I. To implement reasonable and prudent measure RPM 1 (minimize take from livestock grazing), the WWNF shall:
 - a. The WWNF and its permittees shall ensure that pastures are monitored midseason and end-of-season at the frequency described in the Proposed Action. For pastures which overlap with ESA-listed fish and where habitat indicators are not meeting objectives, implement a mid-season move trigger of 15 percent streambank alteration.
 - Trigger or end of season monitoring did not occur at the Big Sheep Creek DMA in 2021.
 - b. The WWNF shall ensure that appropriately trained WWNF staff monitor streambank alteration levels, at the DMAs which the WWNF has proposed for each pasture. If the take surrogate of 20 percent streambank alteration is exceeded, the WWNF shall contact the NMFS Snake Basin Area Office immediately.
 - End of season monitoring data was not collected at the Upper Big Sheep pasture DMA for the 2021 grazing season.
 - c. The WWNF shall ensure all enclosures, fences, and water developments that reduce cattle use adjacent to streams are properly maintained and functioning as intended.
 - The Big Sheep Allotment does not have enclosure fences to disperse cattle away from riparian areas.
 - The allotment boundary fence with Big Sheep Allotment and Bear Gulch Allotment in the Fulton Creek drainage was not maintained. This resulted in unauthorized use by Big Sheep Allotment cattle in Bear Gulch on the Bear Gulch Allotment.
 - The Big Sheep Allotment Permittee is required to complete the maintenance prior to allowing cattle to graze the Big Sheep Allotment in the next grazing season.
 - d. The WWNF shall use the Long-Term and Annual Adaptive Management Strategies described in the Proposed Action to adjust grazing management strategies when needed to maintain desired stream habitat conditions and minimize incidental take.

- Effectiveness data was collected in 2020 at the DMA in the Upper Big Sheep pasture on Big Sheep Creek and is planned for collection each 5 years (2025, 2030, 2035, ...).

II. The following terms and conditions implement RPM 2 (monitoring and reporting). The WWNF shall:

Submit an annual monitoring report to NMFS by February 1 each year with the following:

- Overview of proposed action and actual management (e.g., livestock numbers, on-off dates for each pasture, etc.)
 - Table 1 is the permitted use and Table 2 is the 2021 grazing schedule.

Table 1. Permitted Livestock Numbers On-Off Dates by Permittee

Permittee	Class	Term	Private Land	Season	Head Months
Dean Oregon Ranch	c/c	350		4/16 - 6/30	875
	c/c	300		11/1 – 12/31	602
				Forest total	1477

Table 2. Big Sheep 2021 Grazing Schedule

Units	Head	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Spring										
<u>Lower Big Sheep (Area 02)</u> Muley Creek	25	16--	--31							
Steer Creek	Rest									
Wildhorse Creek	180	16--	-- 31		180+25=205					
Lost Basin Ck		16--	-- 31							
Deadhorse Ridge/Rattlesnake	110			1--30	205-110=95					
<u>Lower Big Sheep (Area 01)</u> Indian Grave	90	16--	--31		Indian Grave 90 are split between Fulton and Warden on 6/1					
<u>Lower Big Sheep (Area 02)</u> Fulton Creek	45			1--30						
Warden Creek	45			1--30						
<u>Upper Big Sheep (Area 03)</u> Redrock Creek	27/ 75	16--	--31	1— 30	95/2=47.5 27+48=75 28+47=75					
Cowhead Creek	28/ 75	16--	--31	1— 30						
Upper Sheep Breaks (pvt)					Rattlesnake Spring Area					
<u>Upper Big Sheep (Area 04)</u> Timber Creek (Bunch Pt.)**	100				Catchfly deferment				1 --	-- 31
Fall/Winter										
<u>Upper Big Sheep</u> Upper Sheep Breaks (pvt)	300								1--15	
Redrock Creek	300								16-30	
Cowhead Creek	300									1--14
<u>Lower Big Sheep</u> Muley Creek	300									15-21

- b. Results from all implementation monitoring identified as part of the proposed action, including required move-trigger and end-of-season monitoring (i.e., stubble height, riparian shrub utilization, streambank alteration), seral condition, bank stability, water temperature, sediment, and width-to-depth ration.
 - Trigger and end of season monitoring did not occur at the Big Sheep Creek DMA in 2021.
- c. Discussion of any unauthorized use and /or any maintenance issues related to fences or water developments.
 - The allotment boundary fence with Big Sheep Allotment and Bear Gulch Allotment in the Fulton Creek drainage was not maintained. This resulted in unauthorized use by Big Sheep Allotment cattle in Bear Gulch on the Bear Gulch Allotment.
 - The Big Sheep Allotment Permittee is required to complete the maintenance prior to allowing cattle to graze the Big Sheep Allotment in the next grazing season.
- d. Review of allotment compliance with annual use indicators. For any incidences of non-compliance, describe the WWNF response per the Annual Adaptive Management Strategy in the Proposed Action.
 - The Forest Service wrote a non-compliance letter to the Big Sheep Allotment permittee addressing fence maintenance and unauthorized use by Big Sheep Allotment Cattle in Bear Gulch within the Bear Gulch Allotment.
 - The Big Sheep Allotment permittee is required to complete the maintenance prior to allowing cattle to graze the Big Sheep Allotment in the next grazing season.
- e. Detailed description of any adaptive management responses taken by the WWNF as part of the Long-Term and Annual Adaptive Management Strategies described in the Proposed Action.
 - A letter was written to the Big Sheep Allotment permittee addressing fence maintenance and unauthorized use by Big Sheep Allotment Cattle in Bear Gulch within the Bear Gulch Allotment.
 - The Big Sheep Allotment permittee is required to complete the maintenance prior to allowing cattle to graze the Big Sheep Allotment in the next grazing season.
- f. Any relevant information that becomes available regarding Snake River Basin steelhead or Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon habitat trends and /or spawning locations that would modify the assumptions made in this opinion or result in effects not considered.
 - There is no new information to report at this time.
- g. Any management recommendations for subsequent years.
 - Monitor Marr Creek in the Timber Creek Pasture each five years (2022, 2027, 2032, ...) for cattle use.

- Monitor Squaw Creek in the Upper Big Sheep Pasture each five years (2024, 2029, 2034, ...) for cattle use.
- Permittees will trigger monitor mid-season at the Big Sheep Creek DMA in the Upper Big Sheep Pasture each year.
- Monitor annual use indicators at the upper Big Sheep pasture DMA on Big Sheep Creek annually and collect effectiveness data each 5 years (2025, 2030, 2035, ...).
- Maintain Fence and Water developments prior to allowing cattle onto the allotment.
- Graze cows in authorized areas based on the planned schedule and use monitoring.