**Big Sheep 2020 End of Year Report**

**NMFS BO No: WCR-2017-7355**

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Wallowa Valley Ranger District

January 7, 2021

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**

1. To implement reasonable and prudent measure RPM 1 (minimize take from livestock grazing), the WWNF shall:
   1. Monitor pastures mid-season and at the end-of-season as described in the Proposed Action.

No mid-season monitoring was completed for the riparian areas on the Big Sheep allotment. End-of season/effectiveness monitoring was completed on August 26, 2020 at the DMA in the Upper Big Sheep Pasture. Woody Use 18%, Bank Alteration 1 %, and there are no values for Stubble Height. Values obtained are all within allowable use.

* Squaw Creek and Marr Creek in the Upper Big Sheep pasture have cattle accessible steelhead critical habitat and are grazed prior to July 1st. Photos were taken and cow presence was looked for at Marr Creek in 2017 and is scheduled for 2022 revisit. Photos were taken and cow presence was looked for at Squaw Creek in 2019 and is scheduled for 2024 revisit. Minimal cattle evidence was noted at either location. No cattle were seen, grazing was not observable, and past presence has been minimal indicated by the few cow pies found at either creek.

* 1. Monitor streambank alteration levels, at the DMA sites which the WWNF staff has proposed for each pasture.
* End of season monitoring data was collected at the upper Big Sheep pasture DMA on August 26, 2020. Stubble height was not performed, bank alteration was 1% (2% in 2019), and woody browse use was slight (18%). This monitoring was in part of the effectiveness data was collected in the 2020 season of use.
  1. The WWNF shall ensure all enclosures, fences, and water developments that reduce cattle use adjacent to streams are properly maintained and functioning as intended.
* There are no known riparian enclosures in the Big Sheep Allotment.
* There are no known trespass issues for the 2020 grazing season
* Maintenance on water developments is ongoing.
  1. 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.
* End of season monitoring data was collected by the effectiveness monitoring team, at the upper Big Sheep pasture DMA, on August 26, 2020. Stubble height was not performed, bank alteration was 1% (compared to 2% last year), and woody browse use was slight (18%).

**Table 1**. Big Sheep steelhead spawning habitat accessible to livestock before July 1

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pasture** | **Key Area** | **Location** | **Stream** |
| Upper Big Sheep | K11A Squaw Creek | 2S, 47E, SWNE,23 | Squaw Creek, Tributary to Big Sheep |
| Upper Big Sheep | Marr Creek | 2S, 47E, Sec, 26, 27, 34. 3S, 47E, Sec, 2, | Marr Creek, Tributary to Big Sheep |
| Upper Big Sheep | Upper Big Sheep DMA | 11T UTM 510455/5028595 | Big Sheep Creek |

1. The following terms and conditions implement RPM 2 (monitoring and reporting). The WWNF shall:
   1. Submit an annual monitoring report to NMFS by February 1 each year with the following:
      1. Overview of proposed action and actual management (e.g., livestock numbers, on-off dates for each pasture, etc.)
      * Table 2 is the permitted use and table 3 is the 2020 grazing schedule.

**Table 2.** Permitted Livestock Numbers On-Off Dates by Permittee

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Permittee** | **Class** | **Term** | **Private Land** | **Season** | **Head Months** |
| The Christopher Reed Buhler Income Trust | c/c | 350 |  | 4/16 - 6/30 | 875 |
|  | c/c | 300 |  | 11/1 – 12/31 | 602 |
|  |  |  |  | **Forest total** | **1477** |

**Table 3.** Big Sheep 2020 Grazing Schedule

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Units** | **Head** | **April** | **May** | **June** | **July** | **Aug** | **Sep** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** |
| **Spring** | | | | | | | | | | |
| ***Lower Big Sheep (Area 02)***  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 | |  |  |  |  |
| ***Indian Grave (Area 01)***  Indian Grave | 90 | 16-- | --31 |  | Indian Grave 90 are split between Fulton and Warden on 6/1 | | | | | |
| ***Lower Big Sheep (Area 02)***  Fulton Creek | 45 |  |  | 1--30 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Warden Creek | 45 |  |  | 1--30 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Upper Big Sheep (Area 03)***  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 | | | | | |
| ***Upper Big Sheep* (Area 04)**  Timber Creek (Bunch Pt.)\*\* | 100 |  |  |  | Catchfly deferment | | |  | 1 -- | -- 31 |
| **Summer\*** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Marr Flat Allotment**  (start in Big Sheep Rip. unit) | 100 |  |  |  | 10- | --10 | Begin moving cattle out the unit prior to August 10th. | | | |
| **Spoon spg (Marr Flat)** | 100 |  |  |  | 1-9 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 50 |  |  |  |  | 11-- |  | --31 |  |  |
| **Miller/Tyee (Marr Flat)** | 50 |  |  |  |  | 11-- |  | --31 |  |  |
| Balance goes to Private Land (Big Sheep Cattle |  |  |  |  | 1-- | -- | -- | --31 |  |  |
| **Fall/Winter** | | | | | | | | | | |
| ***Upper Big Sheep (03)***  Upper Sheep Breaks (pvt) | 300 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1--15 |  |
| Redrock Creek | 300 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 16-30 |  |
| Cowhead Creek | 300 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1--14 |
| ***Lower Big Sheep (02)***  Muley Creek | 300 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 15-21 |
| Gaily Creek | 300 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 22-31 |

* + 1. Results from all implementation and 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.
* End of season monitoring data was collected with the effectiveness data, on the upper Big Sheep pasture DMA on August 26, 2020. Stubble height was not performed, bank alteration was 1% (compared to 2% last year), and woody browse use was slight (18%).
  + 1. Discussion of any unauthorized use and /or any maintenance issues related to fences or water developments.
* No unauthorized use or maintenance issues to report at this time.
  + 1. 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.
* No compliance issues, or non-compliance issued at this time
  + 1. 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.
* Grazing complied with the current grazing strategy as seen in table 3.
  + 1. 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.
* No information available at this time.
  + 1. Any management recommendations for subsequent years.

Management recommendations for followings years would be:

1. Re-visit Marr Creek in 2023.
2. Re-visit Squaw Creek in 2024.
3. Collect EOS riparian monitoring data at the upper Big Sheep pasture DMA on Big Sheep Creek in 2021.
4. Permittees complete mid-season monitoring.