

Big Sheep Allotment 2024 End of Year Report

NMFS BO No: WCR-2017-7355

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Wallowa Valley Ranger District

16 May 2024

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. Monitor pastures mid-season and at the end-of-season as described in the Proposed Action.
 - No mid-season or end of season monitoring was completed for the riparian areas on the Big Sheep allotment for the 2024 grazing season.
 - b. Monitor streambank alteration levels, at the DMA sites which the WWNF staff has proposed for each pasture.
 - No mid-season or end of season monitoring was completed for the riparian areas on the Big Sheep allotment for the 2024 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.
 - There are no known riparian enclosures in the Big Sheep Allotment.
 - 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.
 - Wagnataw Creek is scheduled to be observed in 2023.
 - Marr Creek is scheduled to be observed in 2023.

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 |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|

- e. 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 2 is the permitted use in 2023 and table 3 is the 2023 grazing schedule.

Table 2. 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 2023 non use |
| | c/c | 300 | | 11/1 – 12/31 | 602 2023 non use |
| | | | | Forest total | 1477 |
| BJ and Emily Warnock | c/c | 75 | | 1 to 30 May | 75 |
| BJ and Emily Warnock | c/c | 118 | | 1 June to 31 Oct | 594 |

Table 3. Big Sheep 2021 Grazing Schedule

| Units | Head | April | May | June | July | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------|--------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Spring | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lower Big Sheep (Area 02) | 118 | | | 1- | - | -15 | | | | |
| Upper Big Sheep (Area 03) | 75 118 | | 1 – 30 | | | 16- | - | -31 | | |
| Fall/Winter | | | | | | | | | | |
| Upper Big Sheep | Rest | | | | | | | | | |
| Lower Big Sheep | Rest | | | | | | | | | |
| Timber Creek | Rest | | | | | | | | | |

- 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.
 - End of season monitoring data was not collected at the Upper Big Sheep pasture DMA for the 2023 grazing season.
 - No trigger monitoring noted for the 2023 grazing season.
 - Marr Creek is accessed by private land adjacent to the Big Sheep Allotment. Forest Service employees were not given permission for access from the private land owner when requested so Marr Creek was not visited in 2023.
 - Wagnataw Creek was visited in the fall of 2023. A livestock trail has been cut out and is being used to move cattle. This is a change from the previous visit to Wagnataw Creek where little or no presence of cattle was not found or noticed.
- Discussion of any unauthorized use and /or any maintenance issues related to fences or water developments.

-
- iii. 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.
 - Big Sheep Allotment was grazed under a temporary grazing permit in 2023.
- iv. 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.
 - No adaptive management actions were taken.
- v. 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 to report.
- vi. Any management recommendations for subsequent years.
Management recommendations for followings years would be:
 - Collect EOS riparian monitoring at the upper Big Sheep pasture DMA on Big Sheep Creek.
 - Maintain Fence and Water developments prior to turning out.
 - Graze cows in authorized areas.
 - Permittees complete mid-season monitoring.