

Wildlife and Wild Horse Group Appeal De-rails BLM Grazing Scheme to Resurrect Zombie AUMs

Administrative law judge of the Office of Hearing and Appeals vacated and remanded an Oregon Cattle Grazing expansion decision by the BLM.

BURNS, OREGON, UNITED STATES, July 28, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, an Administrative law judge of the Office of Hearings and Appeals vacated and remanded (OHA: OR-020-22-02) an Oregon Cattle Grazing expansion decision by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Alvord Allotment Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA) back to the drawing board. The EA created plans for nationally significant public lands with a mountain of important values to be sacrificed to suit the desires of one of the largest public lands cattle permits in Oregon.

[WildLands Defense](#) and [Wild Horse Education](#) Appealed BLM's grazing decision in May of 2022. The BLM decision resurrected "zombie" AUMs suspended in 1965 to substantially increase cow numbers. It allowed rampant water hauling on primitive roads so cattle could exploit remnant better condition sites inside Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), Sage-grouse and Kit Fox habitat, critical big game habitat



Existing spring damage from livestock in the area



Milkweed, essential to the endangered Monarch butterfly

and an important Wild Horse area. The Coyote Lake-Alvord-Tule Springs Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) lands and the Wilderness Study Areas are primary targets. BLM also authorized drilling 7 new wells (several right on WSA borders), more lethal barbed wire fencing, expanded rancher “flexibility” exploitation with a year-round grazing period, and authorized BLM to issue “extra” non-renewable grazing AUMs annually behind closed doors with public input shut out.



Dead cows appear all over the area

Katie Fite: of WildLands Defense “The Alvord allotment with its great biodiversity and wonderful high desert

wild lands and vistas includes many BLM National Landscape Conservation System: Seven WSAs, Steens Mountain Wilderness, Mickey Basin Research Natural Area, the Alvord Desert and Mickey Hot Springs Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and plus nearly 200,000 acres of Sage-grouse habitat and crucial low elevation sagebrush habitat for migratory birds like Sage Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike. BLM used rancher-hired consultant data to concoct an EA analysis fraught with deception, omissions, misinformation and magical thinking to try to deceive the public that the zombie AUMs, water hauling, “non-renewable” grazing, and cattle facility expansion would not harm these outstanding lands that belong to the American people. It’s readily apparent that there are already far too many cows being grazed here and serious grazing management failures – as the dead cow skeletons littering the landscape show”.

BLM outright increased cattle numbers in the Wild Horse HMA and targeted its land for an unknown amount of annually issued extra non-renewable grazing too. Appropriate Management Level (AML) for horses was set in the 1980s. The HMA is managed as part of the Barren Valley Complex, where a separate BLM 2020 plan targets a low AML - for Barren Valley that number is 459 horses across nearly 1 million acres. The grazing decision would have eaten into the food, cover, and space allocated to Wild Horses and Big game, and Sage-grouse habitat.

Laura Leigh of Wild Horse Education: “Even, in the rare occasion, when underlying documents state that if forage (Animal Unit Months, AUM) are increased for livestock, an increase will be analyzed for wild horses, BLM doesn’t do it. Wild horses are scapegoated and shortchanged at every turn. The accelerated removals, to historic high numbers, of wild horses is driven by give aways into private-pocket profits, like this one. I am happy to see the BLM vacate the EA, but expect them to issue another monstrosity in the coming year. We must remain vigilant.”

In the face of 2022’s climate stress and the mega-drought bearing down on the Oregon high

desert – this EA would have set the clock back worse than what was taking place before the passage of NEPA (1970), the Wild Horse and Burro Act (1971), FLPMA (1976) and the Endangered Species Act (1973).

BLM's grazing program is utterly broken, and getting worse. All over the West we are seeing these types of massive and convoluted grazing decisions like this one: Wilson Creek in eastern Nevada and several coming out of the Bruneau district in Idaho. The agency must be reined in and radical reform of the BLM grazing program is desperately needed. Our public lands are being ruined, forever, by for-profit grazing and leaving our public landscapes a filled with cheatgrass, more vulnerable to wildfire as desertification continues to be caused by cattle grazing.

Visit: WildLands Defense and Wild Horse Education to learn more about the ongoing battle to save America's wild places and the amazing wildlife that call public lands "home."

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