

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2001

CONTACT:

Laird Lucas, Land and Water Fund - (208) 342-7024

Jon Marvel, Western Watersheds Project - (208) 788-2290

CONSERVATIONISTS FORCE BLM TO IMPLEMENT GRAZING CHANGES IN EASTERN OREGON

Western Watersheds Project, Oregon Natural Desert Association, and Committee for Idaho's High Desert announced today that a lawsuit they filed earlier this month has succeeded in its goals of forcing BLM to revise grazing on over 260,000 acres of public land in the Bully Creek area of eastern Oregon.

They filed a federal court suit against BLM on March 14 seeking to force the agency to issue new grazing permits which would substantially restrict grazing on 20 allotments in the Bully Creek area, in order to protect streams, fish and wildlife. The groups also sought an injunction to halt livestock grazing on the allotments until BLM implemented the grazing changes.

In a Stipulation filed with the federal court in Portland on March 29, BLM and the Bully Creek permittees agreed to take the steps sought by the conservationists in order to avoid the requested injunction. BLM agreed to issue new grazing permits by April 1st implementing the changes in grazing management, and the ranchers agreed to sign the new permits -- a step necessary for them to be able to turnout livestock this year.

"BLM was blatantly violating its own regulations here by not acting to halt severe resource degradation that it has found from livestock grazing in the Bully Creek allotments," said attorney Laird Lucas of the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies, who represented the groups.

"BLM is slowly moving to stop the worst grazing abuses on Oregon public lands," said Bill Marlett, executive director of Oregon Natural Desert Association, "and this is a step in the right direction. There is still a lot more to be done though."

"Livestock grazing is the single most important cause of the decline in fish and wildlife in the sagebrush country," said Pam Marcum of Committee for Idaho's High Desert. "I'm pleased that the agencies are now starting to wake up to this fact, and the need to begin managing livestock more responsibly."