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BLM Allowing Harmful Grazing Practices to Continue on Pleasantview Allotment

Boise, Idaho - On Wednesday October 17, 2001 Western Watersheds Project and the Idaho Conservation League filed a complaint in federal district court in Boise, Idaho against the Pocatello Field office of the BLM. Attorney Judi Brawer of the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies is representing the groups.

The complaint charges that the BLM is in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and BLM regulations regarding the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (43 CFR 4180) in issuing a grazing permit for the 65,000 acre Pleasantview allotment located in Oneida County, Idaho about 18 miles west of Malad, Idaho and about 10 miles north of the Utah border.

The BLM issued the new permit in June 2001 after completing a Standards and Guidelines Assessment of the allotment in September 2000 which determined that several Standards were not being met and that livestock grazing was the cause of the poor conditions. The three creeks on the allotment, Wood Canyon Creek, Sheep Creek and the South Fork of Sheep Creek, were all in non-functioning or low functioning at risk categories, their levels of sediment and fecal coliform bacteria exceeded Idaho water quality standards, and the canyon bottoms of the allotment no longer had any native plants present because of decades of cattle grazing. The BLM also determined that the allotment was overstocked with cattle by 19%, but only authorized an 8% reduction in AUMs to be phased in over four years.

In its decision, the BLM also stated that between \$100,000 and \$400,000 of federal funds would be necessary for fencing, pipelines, and cattle troughs in order to improve conditions, but because of the lack of available funding did not implement any of these proposed installations. The agency receives approximately \$13,500 in annual grazing fees from the Pleasantview Grazing Association.

The BLM also permitted the ranchers to graze this year without installing a required electric fence to protect riparian areas on the allotment, claiming that because it was a drought year the creeks would dry up anyway and no damage would occur.

The Pleasantview allotment is notable in an historic way because it was the focus of an intensive rest-rotation "management system" developed by the well-known grazing authority, the late Gus Hormay, twenty three years ago. This management plan resulted in the installation of over \$1,000,000 in pipelines, cattle tanks and troughs, including a new electric power line that helps pump water up two thousand vertical feet to several 20,000 gallon holding tanks (the water is then distributed by gravity to tens of miles of pipelines and cattle troughs). The management plan was funded by a special federal appropriation believed to be authored by Idaho's then junior U.S.

Senator, James McClure. The legacy of Gus Hormay on this allotment is the failure BLM now acknowledges but refuses to correct.

WWP has been informed by reliable sources that significant interference by the Idaho Congressional delegation resulted in pressure on the BLM to avoid major cutbacks in livestock use on this allotment.