



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



Idaho Falls District
Upper Snake Field Office
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Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401-2100

In Reply Refer To:

4100

Dr. Andrew C. Hammond
Area Director
USDA, ARS, PWA
800 Buchanan St.
Albany, CA 94710-1105

JUN 1 1 2012

Dear Dr. Hammond:

The Upper Snake Field Office (USFO) of the Idaho Falls District has authorized the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station (USSES) in Dubois, Idaho to graze domestic sheep on the Bernice Allotment near Howe, Idaho under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The current MOU signed in 2007 by Dwayne Buxton of USDA-ARS Pacific West Area and Wendy Reynolds, prior Field Manager of the USFO, expires in December of this year. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that after consideration and consultation with the Idaho BLM State Office, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and other agencies and organizations, the USFO is terminating the existing MOU which expires this December, effective immediately. Further, the USFO will not be renewing the MOU and no domestic sheep grazing will be authorized in the near future on the Bernice Allotment.

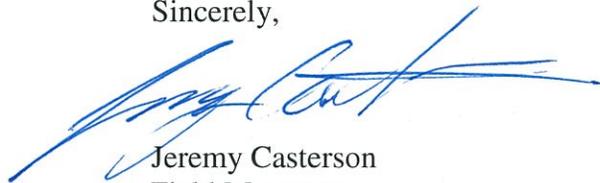
The decision to terminate the existing MOU and forgo renewing the MOU was not reached lightly. Dr. Greg Lewis of the USSES has been clear about the value of the allotment in terms of on-going research conducted by the USSES. However, it is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. As you may be aware, the Bernice Allotment provides habitat for bighorn sheep as identified by IDFG, and is directly adjacent to a large tract of intact bighorn sheep habitat. The risk of direct contact between domestic and bighorn sheep is relatively high in this allotment as the timing of domestic sheep use between November 23 and February 5 directly overlaps with winter habitat use by bighorn sheep in the lower elevations of the Lemhi range. Direct contact has the potential to result in disease transmission leading to initial illness and death of bighorn sheep following contact and reduced lamb survival for a number of years following contact.

The impacts of domestic sheep grazing in the Bernice Allotment were reviewed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act in 1999. Since that time additional information regarding bighorn sheep use and movements within the area has been collected. Further, additional research has been conducted relative to disease transmission between domestic and wild

sheep, since 1999. While there is no expiration date relative to the previous EA, the availability of new, previously unconsidered information regarding bighorn sheep, both general and site-specific, would indicate that the level of analysis in the previous EA may now be considered outdated. The USFO is currently updating its land use planning documents and will be issuing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the near future. Impacts regarding bighorn sheep will be described in the EIS. While domestic sheep grazing may be allowed in the future on the Bernice Allotment, due to the potential of irreparable harm to bighorn sheep population in the south Lemhi Range in the interim period, no domestic sheep grazing will be authorized in the Bernice Allotment until completion of the USFO land use planning effort and related EIS.

If you have any question I can be reached at (208) 524-7500.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Casterson
Field Manager
Upper Snake Field Office

Cc:

USDA-U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, c/o Greg Lewis, 19 Office Loop, Dubois, ID 83423