

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Land Management****43 CFR Part 4100****[WO-220-1020-24 1A]****RIN: 1004-AD42****Grazing Administration—Exclusive of Alaska****AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.**ACTION:** Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes amending its regulations concerning how BLM administers livestock grazing on public lands. The proposed changes would: improve BLM's day-to-day grazing management efficiency; ensure BLM documents its considerations of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic consequences of grazing changes; provide that changes in grazing use be phased-in under certain circumstances; allow BLM to share title with permittees and lessees to range improvements in certain circumstances; make clear how BLM will authorize grazing if a BLM decision affecting a grazing permit is stayed pending administrative appeal consistent with court rulings; remove provisions in the present regulations concerning conservation use grazing permits; ensure adequate time for developing and successfully implementing an appropriate management action when BLM finds that current grazing management does not meet standards and guidelines for rangeland health, and that authorized grazing is a significant factor in not achieving one or more land health standards or not conforming with guidelines for grazing administration; and revise some administrative fees. We intend these changes to improve working relationships with permittees and lessees, enhance administrative efficiency, and cost effectiveness, clarify the regulations and protect the health of rangelands.

DATES: You should submit your comments on or before February 6, 2004. The BLM may not necessarily consider comments postmarked or received by messenger or electronic mail after the above date in the decision-making process on the final rule.

Public meetings will be held on dates and at times and places to be announced in subsequent **Federal Register** documents.

ADDRESSES: Mail: Director (630), Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States

Office, 7450 Boston Boulevard, Springfield, Virginia 22153, Attention: RIN 1004-AD42.

Personal or messenger delivery: 1620 L Street NW., Suite 401, Washington, DC 20036.

Direct Internet response: <http://www.blm.gov/nhp/news/regulatory/index.htm> or <http://www.blm.gov/grazing>.

E-mail: WOCComment@blm.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Visser, Rangeland Management Specialist, Rangeland, Soils, Water and Air Group, (202) 452-7743, Ted Hudson (202) 452-5042 or Cynthia Ellis (202) 452-5012 of the Regulatory Affairs Group. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may contact them individually through the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800/877-8339, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

- I. Public Comment Procedures
- II. Background
- III. Why We Are Proposing This Rule
- IV. Section-by-Section Analysis
- V. Procedural Matters

I. Public Comment Procedures*A. How Do I File Comments?*

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods.

- You may mail your comments to: Director (630), Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, 7450 Boston Boulevard, Springfield, Virginia, 22153.
- You may deliver comments to 1620 L Street NW., Suite 401, Washington, DC 20036.
- You may comment via the Internet by accessing our automated commenting system located at www.blm.gov/nhp/news/regulatory/index.htm and following the instructions there.
- You may comment via email at WOCComment@blm.gov.

Please make your comments on the proposed rule as specific as possible, confine them to issues pertinent to the proposed rule, and explain the reason for any changes you recommend. Where possible, your comments should reference the specific section or paragraph of the proposal that you are addressing.

The Department of the Interior may not necessarily consider or include in the Administrative Record for the final rule comments that we receive after the close of the comment period (see **DATES**) or comments delivered to an address other than those listed above (see **ADDRESSES**).

B. May I Review Comments Others Submit?

BLM intends to post all comments on the Internet. If you are requesting that your comment remain confidential, do not send us your comment at the Internet or e-mail address because we immediately post all comments we receive on the Internet. Also, comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the address listed under **ADDRESSES**: Personal or messenger delivery" during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Individual respondents may request confidentiality, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. If you wish to withhold your name or address, except for the city or town, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

II. Background

The regulations on livestock grazing provide the framework for a public land use that has its roots in the settlement of West. The tradition of orderly use of public range in conjunction with private lands was recognized in law with the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA) in the 1930s, and again in 1976 with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The intent of the regulations has always been for the agency to consult and cooperate with the ranchers, private landowners, and other users of the public lands. Our shared purpose must be to sustain the open space, habitat, and watershed values that the public and private lands together can offer.

Providing for livestock grazing is part of the BLM mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands. In part because of its long history, public land grazing is woven into the landscapes and cultures of the rural West, and contributes valuable landscape and culture elements. Our challenge is to establish a framework that helps us accomplish our shared stewardship purpose in a manner that works well in the social and economic context of affected communities.

The ranching families of livestock permittees live and work in the heart of the Western rural landscapes. Their relationship with BLM needs to be more than regulatory if we are to engage in conservation of entire landscapes. Our goals must be to establish simple and