

Chapter 1

Purpose and Need

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws, the Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to disclose the potential effects of grazing in the Upper Green River project area. The project area for this Rangeland Project analysis is located approximately 30 miles northwest of Pinedale, Wyoming and lies within the Pinedale Ranger District of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. This EIS discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts and any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that would result from implementation of the proposed action or alternatives.

This EIS is prepared according to the format established by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 United States Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508). The Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) used a systematic approach for analyzing the proposed project and alternatives to it, estimating the environmental effects, and preparing this EIS. Planning was also coordinated with the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies, and local, federally recognized tribes. Applicable analyses are incorporated into this document through summarization and reference, where appropriate.

In addition to explaining the purpose and need for the proposed action, Chapter 1 discusses how the Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project Analysis relates to the Bridger-Teton National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). It also identifies significant issues driving the analysis. Chapter 2 describes and compares the proposed action, alternatives to the proposed action, and a no-action alternative. Descriptions of existing conditions in the natural and human environments potentially affected by the proposed action and alternatives are contained in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 discloses any anticipated potential effects on those environments. Chapter 5 contains the list of preparers, the EIS distribution list, literature cited, and a glossary. The appendices provide additional information on specific aspects of the proposed project.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of resources in the project area, may be found in the project planning record located at the Pinedale Ranger District Office in Pinedale, Wyoming. These records are available for public review.

1 Purpose and Need

BACKGROUND

The project area is comprised of the following six allotments: Badger Creek, Beaver-Twin Creeks, Noble Pastures, Roaring Fork, Upper Green River, and Wagon Creek.

Approximately 46,100 animal unit months (AUM's) are currently permitted to 21 different term grazing permit holders in the 169,000 acre project area. These permits authorize grazing for a total of approximately 9100 head of cattle and 50 horses in the six allotments. Monitoring conducted in the project area indicates that current grazing use is meeting resource management objectives in most areas; however, monitoring has identified some areas where objectives are not being achieved.

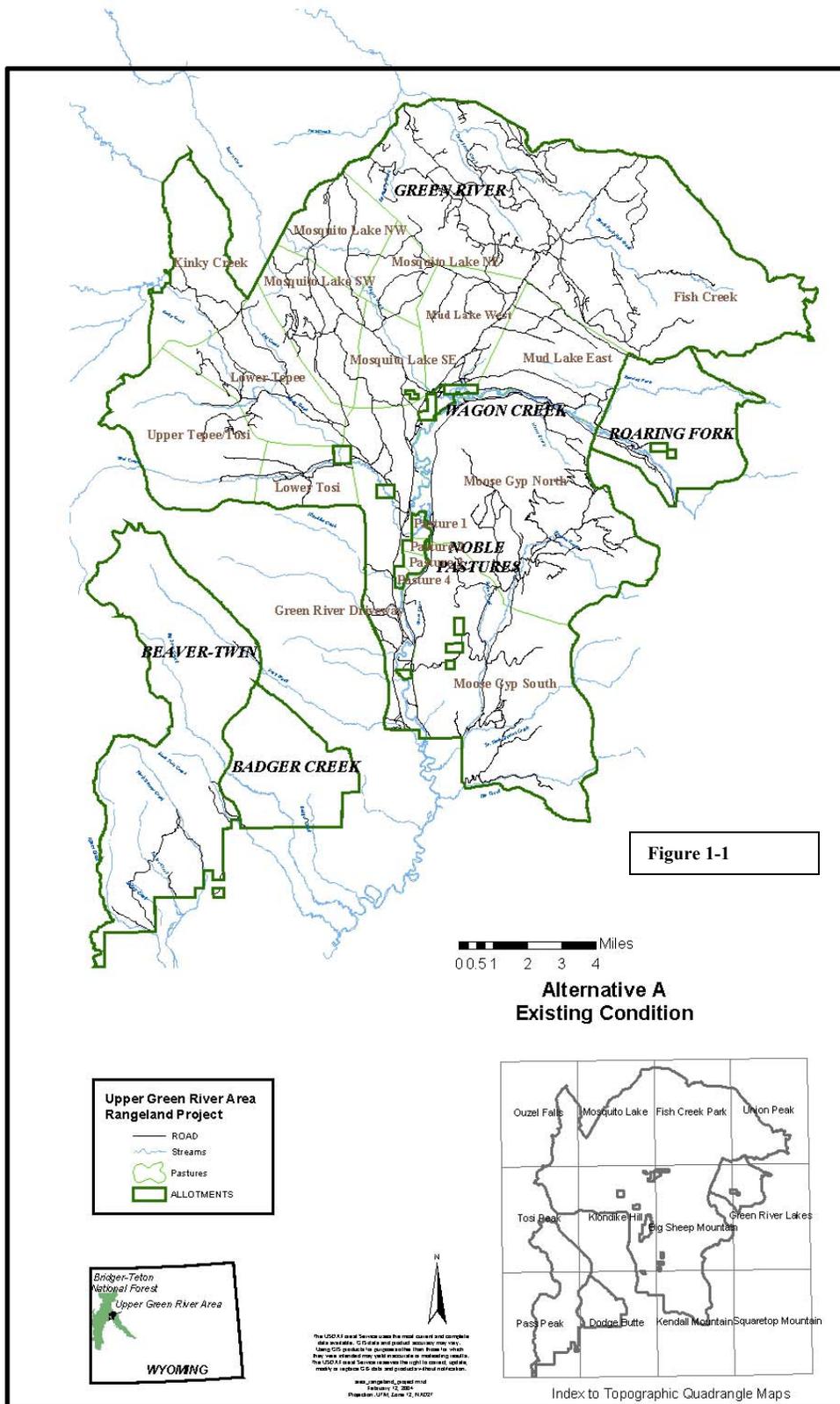
The Pinedale Ranger District completed a mid-level analysis, the Upper Green Landscape Assessment (LSA), in 1999. The primary purposes for conducting the Upper Green LSA were: (1) to present a general overview of past and existing landscape-level resource conditions in the assessment area, (2) to validate or amend existing Forest Plan direction pertaining to the assessment area, and (3) to develop management direction and projects that would integrate the physical, biological, and social concerns identified in the Upper Green River Area of the Pinedale Ranger District. In conjunction with the 1990 Forest Plan, the 1999 Upper Green LSA provides the basis for much of the analysis in this EIS; all six of the allotments that comprise the project area lie within the larger 1999 Upper Green LSA area.

Acres displayed throughout this document were derived using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and may vary slightly from other sources. Acreage figures and some other resource data may be rounded.

PROJECT AREA

The project area is located in western Wyoming; approximately 30 miles northwest of Pinedale, Wyoming (see the project area vicinity map, Figure 1-1, below). The majority of the project area lies within Sublette County, with small portions that extend into Teton and Fremont Counties. The entire 169,000 acre project area lies within the boundaries of the Pinedale Ranger District and is included in portions of Bridger-Teton National Forest Management Areas 71 and 72. It encompasses the headwaters of both the Green River drainage of the Colorado River System and the Gros Ventre River drainage of the Snake/Columbia River Basin System. Small portions of both the Gros Ventre and Bridger Wildernesses are located in the project area (on the western and eastern sides, respectively). State and private lands lie adjacent to the southern portion of the project area, and private land is also located inside the southern boundary. The northern boundary of the project area is marked by the Continental Divide, which separates the Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests.

Purpose and Need 1



1 Purpose and Need

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this analysis is to decide if livestock grazing is appropriate within the project area. If livestock grazing is appropriate, there may be a need to update and/or refine desired rangeland conditions and develop new management prescriptions to meet them. Integral to this is a need to confirm or attain compliance and consistency of this analysis and its resultant decision with legal mandates, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1976 (NEPA), as well as policy direction, including the Forest Plan.

The Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project analysis is scheduled at this time to comply with Section 504 of the Rescissions Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-19), which requires the Forest Service to “schedule and complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis on all allotments where needed to support grazing activity.” Additional reasons for completing environment analysis at this time include:

- meeting overall Forest Service objectives pertaining to proper utilization of available forage (for both wildlife and livestock) while moving toward the desired rangeland conditions specified in the Forest Plan;
- assessing current livestock management practices to determine whether resource objectives are being met within the six allotments in the project area, and, if not, what management strategies or standards may be needed to meet these objectives;
- providing an amount of forage for livestock that contributes to the goals established in the Forest Plan to support community prosperity (Goal 1.1, page 112).

One of the tasks of the ID Team, under direction from the District Ranger, is to take broad resource management direction from the Forest Plan and develop efficient methods to measure whether those objectives are being achieved. Monitoring conducted in the project area indicates that current grazing use is meeting resource management objectives in most cases. However, monitoring has identified some instances where objectives may not have been achieved.

Site-specific monitoring and permit administration information regarding the current grazing use has been collected for the project area since the current Allotment Management Plans were developed, as early as 1975. Based on current information, Forest Service resource management specialists have determined that existing rangeland resource conditions within the project area warrant time-dependent implementation of updated grazing management direction. The assessment of grazing management in these areas is also listed in the Bridger-Teton National Forest’s 1996 NEPA Rescission Schedule and Schedule of Forest Management Activities. Implementation of updated grazing management direction—in the form of revised grazing use standards, Best Management Practices, and mitigation measures—would help achieve desired conditions, consistent with Forest Plan Goals and Objectives.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Based on the environmental study and analysis in this EIS, the Pinedale District Ranger will decide whether to authorize continued livestock grazing in the project area in accordance with Forest Plan goals, objectives, and DFCs. Specifically, the District Ranger will decide:

- whether livestock grazing is appropriate within the project area;
- whether grazing allotments are currently being managed to achieve resource objectives, and (for those that are not) what changes in management strategies and standards or mitigation measures are needed to achieve desired conditions;
- what structural improvements (e.g., fences, water tanks, and pipelines) are needed to meet resource objectives regarding proper livestock distribution; and
- the frequency and type of monitoring needed to determine whether resource objectives and DFC's are being achieved.

Administrative scope:

This analysis will not determine the suitability of particular areas for livestock grazing or who holds term livestock grazing permits. These determinations are made in the Forest Plan and by administrative processes, respectively. This analysis focuses on livestock grazing at proper use; therefore, using adaptive management, the actual number of AUM's permitted in the project area would be determined based on meeting proper use criteria with respect to implementation of grazing strategies (as described in FSH 2209.21-93-1; R4 amendment). Administrative decisions such as insignificant or temporary changes in grazing rotation, grazing season, livestock kind or class would be made through administrative processes and not through this analysis. This analysis will determine sideboards or limits for administrative approval of these types of changes.

Vegetative management opportunities (e.g., prescribed fire, timber harvest, and wildlife habitat improvement projects) are also outside the scope of this analysis. The primary purpose of these types of projects is not related to the purpose and need stated for this analysis. Therefore, separate NEPA analyses would be required for vegetative treatment proposals.

PROPOSED ACTION

A "proposed action" is defined early in the project-level planning process. This serves as a starting point for the interdisciplinary team (ID Team), and it gives the public and other agencies specific information on which to focus comments. The ID Team uses these comments (see the discussion of Issues later in this chapter) and information from preliminary analysis to refine the proposed action and develop alternatives to it. All alternatives are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The proposed action, reflected in Alternative B of this EIS, is described in general terms below.

The Pinedale Ranger District is proposing to authorize grazing use within the project area under updated grazing management direction, in order to move existing rangeland resource conditions toward the desired condition via prescriptions developed to achieve compliance

1 Purpose and Need

with Forest Plan direction. That direction includes standards, guidelines, goals, objectives and desired future conditions. Forest Plan direction is described in more detail in the following section (Relationship to the Forest Plan). The updated direction will be incorporated in respective allotment management plans (AMP's) to guide grazing management within the project area.

As a result of this proposal, new AMP's will be developed for the Badger Creek, Beaver-Twin Creeks, Noble Pastures, and Wagon Creek allotments. Existing AMP's for the Roaring Fork and Upper Green River allotments will be updated to reflect any new management direction. Grazing management strategies will be developed or revised in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 36 CFR 222.1(b)(2), which describes allotment management planning provisions. Current grazing management strategies will be maintained where resource objectives are being achieved, and new management strategies will be implemented in areas where resource objectives have not been met. Rotational grazing systems will be initiated in the Badger Creek, Beaver-Twin Creeks, and Roaring Fork allotments and modified, as needed, in the remaining allotments to ensure desired conditions are reached. For a more detailed description of the proposed action, refer to Alternative B under the discussion of alternatives in Chapter 2.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE FOREST PLAN

National forest planning takes place at several levels: national, regional, forest, and project. The Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project Decision EIS is a project-level analysis; its scope is confined to addressing the significant issues and possible environmental consequences of the project. It does not attempt to address decisions made at higher levels. It does, however, implement direction provided at those higher levels.

The Forest Plan implements the provisions of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), its regulations, and other guiding documents. The Forest Plan sets forth general direction for managing the land and resources of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Where appropriate, the Upper Green River Area Rangeland Analysis tiers to the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, as encouraged by 40 CFR 1502.20. The Forest Plan uses a system of Management Areas to guide the management of National Forest System lands on the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Each Management Area provides for a unique combination of activities, practices, and uses.

The project area lies within portions of two Management Areas: 71 (Union Pass) and 72 (Upper Green River). As directed by the Forest Plan, these Management Areas are managed to achieve objectives from the following DFC's areas: 2A, 3, 6B, 9A, 10, and 12. Applicable Forest Plan goals, objectives, and DFC's are summarized below. Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan (pp. 249-319) contains a more detailed description of each Management Area.

Forest Plan Goals and Objectives

In tiering from the Forest Plan, selected Forest Plan objectives are applicable to this analysis. Pertinent Forest Plan Goals and Objectives are summarized in the following table additional information can be found on pages 112-121 in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan.

Table 1-1 Forest Plan Goals and Objectives Applicable in the Project Area
<p>Community Prosperity</p> <p>Goal 1.1 – Communities continue or gain greater prosperity. Objective: 1.1(h) – Provide forage for approximately 260,000 Animal Unit Months (AUM’s) of livestock grazing annually.</p> <p>Goal 1.2 – A safe transportation system meets the need of commercial users of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Objective: 1.2(c) – Provide roads, trails and driveways for ranchers to manage approximately 260,000 AUM’s of livestock grazing.</p> <p>Goal 4.8 – Livestock operations are not disrupted needlessly. Objectives: 4.8(a) – Help prevent human interference with livestock operations along driveways and in other areas. 4.8(b) – Help control the spread of noxious weeds. 4.8(c) – Help implement a predator control program where intolerable losses to livestock are demonstrated.</p>
<p>Water Quality</p> <p>Goal 1.3 – Water quantity and quality are retained or improved for local users. Objectives: 1.3(a) – Protect municipal, agricultural, and other potable water supplies and ensure that management activities do not cause deterioration in water-flow timing, quality, or quantity. 1.3(b) – Meet or exceed current State water quality standards and Forest Service water quality goals.</p>

1 Purpose and Need

Table 1-1 (continued)
Forest Plan Goals and Objectives Applicable in the Project Area

Wildlife and Fisheries

Goal 1.1 – Communities continue or gain greater prosperity.

Objective 1.1(g) - Help re-establish historic elk migration routes to provide increased viewing and hunting opportunities for outfitters and clients.

Goal 2.1 – Adequate habitat for wildlife, fish, and edible vegetation to help meet human food needs is preserved.

Objectives:

2.1(a) – Provide suitable and adequate habitat to support the game and fish populations established by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, as agreed to by the Forest Service.

Goal 3.1 – Grizzly bear recovery is achieved.

Objective:

3.1(b) – Prevent needless encounters between grizzly bears and people, and prevent grizzly bears from gaining access to such attractants as food and garbage.

Goal 3.2 – Recovery is achieved for the Endangered species on the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Objectives:

3.2(a) – Cooperate with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish the gray wolf in the Greater Yellowstone Area.

3.2 (i) – Protect populations of, and provide suitable and adequate amounts of habitat for the Kendall Warm Springs dace.

Goal 3.3 – Sensitive species are prevented from becoming a federally listed Threatened species in Wyoming.

Objectives:

3.3(a) – Protect National Forest Service Intermountain Region Sensitive plant and animal species and provide suitable and adequate amounts of habitat to ensure that activities do not cause: (1) long-term or further decline in population numbers or habitats supporting these populations; and, (2) trends towards federal listing.

3.3(b) – In cooperation with Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Trout Unlimited, and BLM, improve lake habitat and stream habitat for Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Goal 4.7 – Grazing use of the National Forest sustains or improves overall range, soils, water, wildlife, and recreation values or experiences.

Objectives:

4.7(a) – Retain or improve forage and overall range condition.

4.7(b) – Retain or enhance riparian vegetation, stream-channel stability, sensitive soils, and water quality where livestock are present.

4.7(c) – Coordinate the management of livestock with recreation use.

4.7(d) – Require that suitable and adequate amounts of forage and cover be retained for wildlife and fish.

Table 1-1 Forest Plan Goals and Objectives Applicable in the Project Area
<p>Recreation and Wilderness</p> <p>Goal 2.3 – High quality dispersed recreation opportunities exist to serve Bridger-Teton National Forest visitors. Objective: 2.3(a) – Retain, improve, and add dispersed recreation opportunities.</p> <p>Goal 2.5 – A safe road and trail system provides access to a range of recreational opportunities and settings.</p> <p>Goal 4.6 – The wilderness character of Congressionally designated Wildernesses is retained or regained. Objective: 4.6(a) – Retain and, where necessary, restore high quality wilderness environments.</p>
<p>Heritage Resources</p> <p>Goal 4.9 – Heritage resources values are preserved. Objective: 4.9(a) – Find and protect heritage resources so that their scientific, historic, and social values are retained.</p> <p>Goal 4.10 – Natural features and landmarks are preserved and retain their settings. Objective: 4.10(a) – Find and protect natural features and landmarks so that their conditions and settings are retained.</p>

Forest Plan Desired Future Conditions (DFC's)

Forest Plan DFC's divide the Forest into management emphasis areas and provide respective themes, management emphases, and prescriptions. This rangeland project analysis tiers from inclusive Forest Plan DFC areas, and their respective emphasis and prescriptions. Table 1-2 displays descriptions of the DFC's that apply to the project area. Complete descriptions for all the DFC's for the Bridger-Teton National Forest may be found in the Forest Plan (pp. 145-248).

1 Purpose and Need

**Table 1-2
Desired Future Conditions (DFC's) in the Project Area**

Desired Future Condition	Area Theme	Management Emphasis/Experience	Vegetation: Range Prescription
<p>DFC 2A Non-motorized Recreation Areas</p> <p><i>Applies to approximately 5 percent of the project area.</i></p>	<p>An unroaded area managed to provide a quiet, almost primitive, recreation experience.</p>	<p>Maintain or enhance primitive and semi-primitive, non-motorized dispersed recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>Range is managed to maintain and enhance range and watershed condition while providing forage for livestock and wildlife.</p>
<p>DFC 3 River Recreation</p> <p><i>Applies to approximately 1 percent of the project area.</i></p>	<p>An area managed to provide river and scenic recreation experiences.</p>	<p>Protect river segments outside of Wilderness that have been determined eligible for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic River system from activities that could diminish or change the free-flowing characteristic, water quality, or the scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, and other values which make the river eligible for designation.</p>	<p>Range is managed to maintain and enhance range and watershed condition while providing forage for livestock and wildlife.</p>
<p>DFC 6B Wilderness</p> <p><i>Applies to approximately 10 percent of the project area.</i></p>	<p>A mostly pristine area where the presence of people is rarely or never noticed.</p>	<p>Provide for the protection and perpetuation of natural biophysical conditions and a high degree of solitude for visitors, but with some perceptible evidence of past human use.</p>	<p>Range is managed to maintain and enhance range and watershed condition while providing forage for livestock and wildlife.</p>
<p>DFC 9A Developed and Administrative Sites</p> <p><i>Applies to less than 1 percent of the project area.</i></p>	<p>An area managed for campgrounds, other non-commercial areas, and Forest Service administrative sites, including related roads and sites.</p>	<p>Emphasize existing and proposed developed recreation sites and Forest Service administrative sites: campgrounds, picnic grounds, trailheads, visitor information centers, water-related recreation facilities and concentrated use areas in Roaded Natural areas.</p>	<p>Grazing is allowed seasonally for vegetative management purposes.</p>

**Table 1-2
Desired Future Conditions (DFC's) in the Project Area**

Desired Future Condition	Area Theme	Management Emphasis/Experience	Vegetation: Range Prescription
<p>DFC 10 Simultaneous Development of Resources, Opportunities for Human Experiences and Support for Big-game and a Wide Variety of Wildlife Species</p> <p><i>Applies to approximately 66 percent of the project area.</i></p>	<p>An area managed to allow for some resource development and roads while having no adverse, and some beneficial, effects on wildlife.</p>	<p>Provide long-term and short-term habitat to meet the needs of wildlife managed in balance with timber harvest, grazing, and minerals development. All surface-disturbing activities are designed to have no effect, or beneficial effects, on wildlife. If any portion of this area contains grizzly bear habitat, no surface-disturbing activities can occur there until the grizzly bear cumulative effects model can be run to help determine potential effects on grizzly bears.</p>	<p>Range is managed to maintain and enhance range and watershed condition while providing forage for livestock and wildlife.</p>
<p>DFC 12 Backcountry Big-Game Hunting, Dispersed Recreation and Wildlife Security Areas</p> <p><i>Applies to approximately 18 percent of the project area.</i></p>	<p>An area managed for high-quality wildlife habitat and escape cover, big-game hunting opportunities, and dispersed recreation activities.</p>	<p>Management emphasis is on providing such important habitat for big-game as winter ranges, feedgrounds, calving areas, and security areas. Management provides for habitat capability and escape cover and maintained Semi-primitive, Non-motorized opportunities that emphasize big-game hunting activities. If any portion of this area contains grizzly bear habitat, no surface-disturbing activities can occur there until the grizzly bear cumulative effects model can be run to help determine potential effects on grizzly bears.</p> <p>You may find some sheep, cattle, and pack animals throughout the area. Livestock are not permitted on crucial big-game winter ranges closed to grazing. Livestock grazing is permitted on other big-game ranges if it does not conflict wildlife needs. You can see evidence of recent livestock grazing in some areas, but not in others.</p>	<p>Range is managed to maintain and enhance range and watershed condition while providing forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly big - game.</p>

1 Purpose and Need

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) defines scoping as "...an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (40 CFR 1501.7). The ID Team used the results of analyses conducted as part of the 1999 Upper Green Landscape Assessment (LSA) to develop the proposed action for this project. Separate scoping processes and periods were used to invite public participation and collect comments for the 1999 Upper Green LSA and the Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project Decision EIS. The relationship between the Upper Green LSA and this EIS is described in more detail in the "Background" section of this chapter.

Public Participation in the 1999 Upper Green Landscape Assessment (LSA)

The Upper Green LSA project was initiated in 1998 and completed in 1999. A team of specialists, representing many different resource areas and agencies, was formed to contribute to the project. These specialists included representatives from the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Sublette County Planning and Zoning Commission, Pinedale Chamber of Commerce, and Wyoming State Lands Office. Private landowners, term grazing and special-use permit holders, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the University of Utah Biology Department, and many other interested citizens also provided input throughout the course of the project. (A complete list of contributors and the project mailing list may be found on page 6-1 of the 1999 Upper Green Landscape Assessment document.) The following methods were used to invite the public to participate in the Upper Green LSA.

Public Mailing

In January 1998, a letter providing information and seeking public comment (the scoping document) was mailed to approximately 50 individuals, organizations, term grazing permit holders, community leaders, land and resource management agencies, owners of land adjacent to the project area, and others who had expressed interest in natural resource management issues.

Local Newspapers

Four announcements about the LSA project were printed in the *Pinedale Roundup*. The first was printed in January, followed by two in March, and one in May, 1999.

Public Meeting

A public meeting was held in Pinedale, Wyoming on March 18, 1999 to provide information and collect comments regarding the project.

Public Participation in the Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project Analysis

This analysis was initiated in January of 2000. An ID Team of Forest Service resource specialists was formed to work on the environmental analysis. The following methods were used to invite the public to participate in this project.

Public Mailing

A scoping letter was mailed to those listed on the Bridger-Teton National Forest's general mailing list on February 10, 2000. The mailing list included private landowners, term grazing permit holders, special interest groups, interested members of the public, and local, state, and federal agencies. The letter described the proposed action, the purpose and need for the project, the process that would be followed for completing the environmental analysis, and the scope of the decision to be made. Additionally, the letter solicited public participation in the process, specifically the submission of comments, concerns, and recommendations regarding management of the six allotments in the project area.

Contacting Term Grazing Permit Holders

Term grazing permit holders, or their representatives, were contacted shortly after the project was initiated to solicit their input concerning management of the six allotments within the project area. Additional informal contacts, discussions, and updates have taken place throughout the analysis process.

Notice of Intent

In July 2003 a Notice of Intent to publish an EIS was published in the Federal Register for this project. This NOI publication opened an additional 30 day public comment period.

ISSUES

Significant Issues

Significant issues for the Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project analysis were identified through public and internal scoping. Twenty-seven individuals, agencies, and organizations submitted comments during the project's initial scoping period (January through April 2000). Five individuals, agencies, and organizations submitted comments during the second scoping period (July through August 2003). The comments were addressed on an individual basis and then categorized. The actual letters received during the comment period are filed in the project planning record at the Pinedale Ranger District.

The most common concerns identified during public scoping related to watershed and riparian area health, the condition of vegetation, and the effects of the project on wildlife and their habitat (particularly Threatened and Endangered species). Based on both internal and public scoping, the Responsible Official determined that the following four issues were significant and within the scope of the project. These issues are addressed through the proposed action and alternatives.

1 Purpose and Need

Issue 1: Effects on Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Sensitive Species (TEPS), as well as other species of concern

The concern is that livestock grazing may affect recovery goals for Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Sensitive species, in addition to viability and habitat objectives for other species in the project area. The Forest Plan provides direction for management indicator species (MIS) and ecological indicator species. Additional species conservation is directed by laws, regulations, and policies.

Issue 2: Riparian and Aquatic Conditions

The concern is that livestock grazing may affect riparian and aquatic conditions. The riparian and aquatic condition issue relates to maintaining the value and function of riparian and aquatic habitats such as soil compaction, the exposure of bare ground, and changes in riparian vegetation composition and vigor. These potential changes in plant communities, combined with stream bank trampling, could result in increased sedimentation and alteration of the stream channel shape, reducing overall aquatic productivity. Riparian zones and stream channels within rangeland settings host a diversity of native riparian dependent species. Stream channels should maintain a seasonal water level in which the bank full discharge access the floodplain regularly, thereby recharging riparian aquifers, ameliorating spring floods, and providing for optimal late season stream flows and cool water temperatures necessary to provide for full support of the streams beneficial uses.

Issue 3: Social and Economic Impacts

Livestock grazing may affect local communities and permittees. Continuing to authorize livestock grazing in the project area would support the custom and culture in surrounding communities and contribute to Forest Plan goals for community prosperity. The concern is that reducing livestock numbers or placing further restrictions on livestock grazing would affect permittees and local communities.

Issue 4: Rangeland Function

Livestock grazing may affect vegetation and soils, which are an important component of fish and wildlife habitat and overall rangeland function. Vegetation communities and watersheds that are not functioning properly provide less than optimum conditions for wildlife and fish. Properly functioning rangelands are diverse and resilient, but vary depending on their site potential. Ground cover is sufficient to provide protection from erosion. Soils are productive and support a variety of age-classes of shrubs, forbs, and native grasses. Sufficient cover and forage for wildlife species is provided under a wide variety of annual climatic responses and at the appropriate season. Noxious weeds are rare or absent. Riparian zones and stream channels are also important components of properly functioning rangelands; these components are discussed more thoroughly within the analysis of Riparian and Aquatic conditions (Issue 1).

Other Environmental Considerations

Many concerns raised during public scoping were not determined to be significant issues for a variety of reasons as described in the following paragraph. These concerns may be discussed in Chapter 3.

Issues Beyond the Scope of this EIS

Some comments received during scoping are not specific to this project or relate to decisions at a higher level of planning. These were considered by the ID Team and determined to be non-significant issues that did not require further analysis. Non-significant issues are those that are: (1) outside the scope of the purpose and need for the project; (2) already decided by law, regulation, the Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; (3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; (4) conjectural and not supported by scientific evidence; (5) not an issue, but a position; or (6) the issue is not treated differently among the action alternatives and thus isn't used to compare the alternatives. Some issues were addressed by incorporating mitigation measures into the action alternatives. They may be displayed as effects in the analysis contained in Chapter 4. The project planning record contains complete information regarding issues raised during scoping and their disposition.

PROJECT AREA DESIRED CONDITIONS

An ID Team of natural resource specialists was assembled for this analysis. One of the jobs of the ID Team was to synthesize the applicable law, regulation, and direction into specific objectives for the project area. The objectives are described in terms of environmental parameters such as groundcover and stream bank stability and discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4 of this analysis. These objectives were used to formulate the proposed action and compare the environmental effects of alternatives to the proposed action.

Applicable Laws and Executive Orders

Shown below is a partial list of federal laws and executive orders pertaining to project-specific planning and environmental analysis on federal lands. Findings and disclosures required by these laws and orders are contained in Chapter 4.

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended)
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, amended 1986
Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended)
The Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA)
Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended)
National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (as amended)
Clean Water Act of 1977 (as amended)
Executive Order 11988 (floodplains)

1 Purpose and Need

Executive Order 11990 (wetlands)

Executive Order 12898 (environmental justice)

Executive Order 12962 (aquatic systems and recreational fisheries)

Executive Order 13186 (neotropical migratory birds)

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1980

Rescissions Act of 1995