Dear Interested Party:

**Introduction:** The Shoshone National Forest is seeking input on a proposal to continue commercial livestock grazing management on three commercial livestock grazing allotments. The proposal includes the following allotments: Maxon Basin, South Pass, and Ed Young Basin all on the Washakie District. See the attached map for the general location of these grazing allotments.

The action proposed by the Shoshone National Forest is to continue to authorize livestock grazing and incorporate adaptive management on all three grazing allotments to meet Forest Plan direction, which provides for a wide range of values and uses. The Proposed Action is designed to maintain or improve resource conditions in rangeland health, vegetation, watershed conditions, and wildlife habitat relative to livestock grazing.

**Purpose and Need:** The Forest Service is directed to complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to evaluate commercial livestock grazing and permitting on an allotment management level. In addition, Forest Service rangeland allotment management calls for the periodic review of allotment conditions and management practices. During these reviews some grazing practices may need to be changed.

To comply with this direction, the Proposed Action and alternatives will be analyzed in an environmental assessment (EA). Allotment specific information such as historical grazing levels; existing range conditions; current stocking rate; currently permitted kind, class, and numbers; season of use; and

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1 Adaptive management is the “the process of making use of monitoring information to determine if management changes are needed, and if so, what changes, and to what degree.” It is a process that allows for dealing with uncertainty and changing conditions over time. This alternative focuses on the end results of meeting or moving toward desired conditions for the resources influenced by grazing as opposed to detailing specific seasons of use, permitted livestock numbers, and grazing rotations.
monitoring and trend data will be presented in the EA. The NEPA process will include a 30-day public comment period for the pre-decisional EA.

The purpose of this project is to develop and apply commercial livestock management that is consistent with the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for the Forest Plan, as amended, and maintain or improve resource conditions in rangeland health, vegetation, and watershed conditions relative to livestock grazing. Our Proposed Action provides adaptive management actions to be implemented if grazing related resource issues are identified or if resource conditions do not move toward or maintain the desired conditions in an acceptable timeframe.

Currently the three allotments are meeting or moving towards desired conditions and utilization standards are being met. Trend and monitoring data show rangeland resources are within the parameter of desired conditions; showing good plant vigor and species composition. Information on each of these allotments will be summarized in more detail in the pre-decisional EA (Range Section 3.1 of Chapter 3).

Monitoring would occur over time with evaluation of the results being used by the rangeland management specialist and/or interdisciplinary team and the District Ranger to determine what adjustments, if necessary, are needed to ensure adequate progress toward or maintenance of desired conditions.

**Proposed Action Details:** The Proposed Action includes a review of three allotments covering approximately 19,130 acres; and a total of 1,934 animal unit months (AUMs).

Under the Proposed Action alternative, livestock grazing would be authorized on the three allotments under an adaptive management system designed to meet desired conditions (Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Chapter 90, 93.3g).

The Proposed Action is based on the principle of applying adaptive management. A proposed course of action was selected as a starting point believed to best maintain or move toward the desired condition. For example, a 2-unit deferred grazing system alone may not provide the anticipated result, but when coupled with light grazing intensity and construction of additional water developments, desired conditions may be met. In some cases certain management actions were precluded from use due to other management concerns.

Possible adaptive grazing management options considered for the Proposed Action are displayed below.

*Table 1. List of possible grazing adaptive management options used to develop the Proposed Action for the three commercial livestock grazing allotments.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Grazing Management Options</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANGE SEASON OF USE</strong>- (i.e. implement a different grazing system, and/or change number of pastures (deferred rotation, more pastures, rest-rotation, short-duration grazing, etc.) to meet resource objectives on the allotment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANGE LIVESTOCK NUMBERS</strong>-(within permitted AUMs)-i.e. change the permitted livestock number and season of use until demonstrated progress toward desired future condition is made (as evidenced by monitoring and inventory data).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANGE LIVESTOCK CLASS</strong>-i.e. change in class of livestock (cow/calf pairs, dry cow, yearling) – do not exceed permitted AUMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADJUST GRAZING INTENSITY/DURATION</strong>- i.e. implement specific dates of use or nonuse to protect areas of concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADJUST LIVESTOCK HERDING to MANAGE SPECIFIC AREAS of CONCERN</strong>-i.e. use of range rider (herding) to aid in livestock distribution and help reduce predation.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Possible Grazing Management Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REST SPECIFIED AREAS FROM LIVESTOCK GRAZING OR ENACT NON-USE FOR RESOURCE PROTECTION</td>
<td>i.e. utilize forage reserve allotments or implement pastures non-use years to address resource concerns or conflicts with predators or otherwise alter periods of use/non-use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTRICT OR DISCOURAGE LIVESTOCK GRAZING IN SPECIFIED AREAS</td>
<td>i.e. adjust how a pasture is used, exclusion of a pasture, use of range improvement projects, encourage livestock grazing in specified areas, discourge use in specified areas such as alpine, use herding to achieve management objectives, adjust pasture or allotment boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREATE, MODIFY, OR REMOVE ALLOTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE (fences)</td>
<td>i.e. construct fence to exclude livestock from areas of concern (springs, seeps, riparian, R2 sensitive species sites, species of local concern, heritage site, or other), construct permanent fence to influence livestock distribution, use temporary electric fence for short-term control of livestock distribution, remove (permanent or temporary) fence to influence livestock distribution, remove (permanent or temporary) fence to influence livestock distribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREATE, MODIFY, OR REMOVE ALLOTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE (water developments)</td>
<td>i.e. Use water to control livestock distribution: control availability of developed water sources to control livestock distribution, haul water to temporary tanks to influence livestock distribution and obtain use in areas that normally receive light to no use (location of tanks is moved around allotment), construct new permanent water development to influence livestock distribution (dugouts/ponds, wells, pipeline, tanks, pump, solar).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJUST PASTURE OR ALLOTMENT BOUNDARIES</td>
<td>i.e. split or combine allotments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Project Design Features for the Proposed Action

The project design/design features are an integral part of the Proposed Action alternative to facilitate meeting the purpose and need. Project design features (PDFs) in the action alternative that apply to all three allotments include incorporation of best management practices (BMPs). They include the State of Wyoming Range BMPs, the State of Wyoming Water BMPs, and information from the R2 Watershed Conservation Handbook.

Project design features for all allotments under the action alternative include:

- Livestock to be grazed is cattle or horses. Acceptable classes of livestock are cow, cow/calf, yearling and pack and saddle stock.
- Allowable utilization will range from 0-50% based on Forest Plan standards and guides (Forest Plan III 53-III-56). Maximum forage utilization would range from 35%-50% depending on the vegetation type, current range conditions, livestock management, and other resource needs (Forest Plan III 118-123).
- Water developments will incorporate practices that sustain both the needs of spring ecosystems as well as the off-site water. This could include only utilizing water when the allotment is occupied. Fencing the spring source and habitat may also be necessary depending on the distance to the off-site water.
- Ground disturbing activities such as installation of water developments, pipelines, fences or enclosures may require additional environmental analysis if not covered in this document.
- Existing range improvements would be reconstructed/replaced as their useful life expectancy is amortized or to respond to natural disasters. Maintain existing range improvements as assigned.
in the term grazing permits. All fences need to be repaired and maintained in order to provide the desired results.

- Range readiness will be evaluated and turn-on dates adjusted as needed. Range readiness is defined as: the stage of plant growth at which grazing may begin under a specific management plan without permanent damage to vegetation or soil (Society of Range Management). Range readiness indicators used on the SNF are found in Appendix E.

- Utilization and adjustment of pasture move dates and move-off dates will be evaluated based on allowable use standards (Forest Plan III 53-III-56).

- New livestock/wildlife water sites will be located out of riparian communities when feasible.

- Use salting to influence livestock distribution patterns. Do not salt within ¼ mile of water sources, eligible heritage sites, or developed recreation sites.

- Tribes will be notified if artifacts or burial sites are found during project implementation.

- When long-term drought situations occur, range permittees will be notified in writing that reductions in season of livestock numbers may be anticipated.

- Defer wildfire or prescribed burn areas from livestock grazing for a portion or all of the following two growing seasons to ensure re-growth of forage species.

- Construct range improvements (fences and water developments) to influence livestock distribution and exclude livestock from areas of concern (springs, seeps, riparian, Region 2 sensitive species sites, species of local concern, heritage sites, or other).

- For any ground disturbing activities such as installation of water developments, pipelines, fences or enclosures, and spring developments include: a) Shoshone National Forest hydrology specialist consultation prior to construction, b) consideration of ground-water dependent ecosystems (springs, wetlands, perennial channels, riparian areas) and ground-water dependent flora and fauna downstream of spring source, c) assessment of other alternatives that provide protection to ecosystem structure (i.e. divert water from a perennial stream, which receives it’s flow from multiple groundwater sources, rather than divert a spring that feeds a single ground-water dependent ecosystem), d) completion of heritage resources and sensitive species surveys prior to construction.

- Spring developments should protect the source area from trampling (i.e. fencing during grazing season), pipe water to an upland water tank, and use automatic shut-off valves that stop the flow once the water tank is filled. Only a small portion of the total discharge should be diverted to a stock water tank, to ensure survival of the downstream ground-water dependent ecosystem. All water rights shall be obtained in the name of the landowner, the U.S. Forest Service.

- Currently, each grazing permit includes general language about the protection of cultural resources. To reduce indirect effects from artifact collection, and increase resource protection awareness, all grazing permits would include Archaeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) specific language. Specific wording to include in new permits include:
  
  - Heritage Sites, including Archaeological Sites and Historic Structures:
It is prohibited to collect surface artifacts, gather surface artifacts into piles, dig into, excavate, disturb, injure, destroy, and in any way knowingly damage any prehistoric, historic, or archaeological resource, structure, site, artifact, or property. Information about cultural resources (e.g., archaeological sites) is confidential and not to be released to the general public (36 CFR 296.18).

- **Cultural Resource Discoveries:** In the event that cultural resources are discovered during any allotment or livestock management activities (e.g., herding, improvement maintenance), care shall be exercised by the permittee and the Forest Service to ensure that such finds are not disturbed. The permittee shall inform authorized Forest Service personnel of discoveries as soon as possible. Permit holders are encouraged to take photographs and identify locations on maps or use Geographic Positioning System (GPS). Once discoveries have been identified by the agency, they can be properly documented, researched, and incorporated into site stewardship programs. Permit holders are encouraged to become site stewards to help protect and monitor archaeological and historical sites on the forest.

- **Violation of the applicable Acts and Codes of Federal Regulations may result in the cancellation of the grazing permit.**

**How to Comment and Timeframe**

This comment period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the responsible official(s).

At this time the public is invited to offer comments on this proposal. For further information concerning this proposal contact Brad Russell at the Washakie Ranger District Office, 333 East Main Street, Lander, WY 82520-33499 or at (307) 335-2174.

To ensure consideration in this process comments should be submitted no later than February 7, 2011. Comments on the proposal may be sent by regular mail to Marty Sharp, 203A Yellowstone Avenue, Cody, WY 82414; by fax at (307) 527-7158; or by email to comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-wapiti@fs.fed.us. Please put the title of document in the subject line. Emailed attachments should be in rich text format (.rtf), Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), text (.txt), or Microsoft Word version 2007 or earlier (.doc). Comments may be hand delivered to the ranger district office between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, except holidays.

The scoping notice and associated map will be available at the Shoshone National Forest web page at [http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/shoshone/projects/planning/forest_projects/new_forest_projects.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/shoshone/projects/planning/forest_projects/new_forest_projects.shtml)

Comments should include:
- Name.
- Address.
- Phone number.
- Organization represented (if any).
- Title of document on which comments are being submitted (grazing management on three grazing allotments).
- Specific facts and supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.
Following a review of public comments and other pertinent analysis, we will proceed with the appropriate level of analysis and decision. Responsible officials for the decision will be the Washakie District Ranger.

Sincerely,

RICK METZGER
District Ranger

Enclosure

/s/ Rick Metzger