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Position Statement

THE IDAHO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

on the

Draft E.I.S. entitled, "Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Program for the Challis Planning Unit"

The Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society, an organization composed of professional wildlife workers in Idaho, offers the following position statement with regard to the Bureau of Land Management's proposal to graze livestock on the Challis Planning Unit.

We oppose the proposed grazing plan for the Challis Planning Unit because of the following reasons:

1. The plan is based on inadequate baseline range trend information and speculative assumptions about long term effects of the specified grazing system. In our view, wildlife habitat for elk, antelope, mule deer and sage grouse will decline under the proposed plan.

2. Not enough recognition is given to the bighorn sheep, the large populations that formerly existed there, and the potential of the area to support greater numbers in the future.

We recommend:

1. That livestock be allowed to graze on big game winter ranges only when there is documented evidence that surplus forage exists, or that livestock grazing will improve the range condition for big game.

2. That range rehabilitation techniques such as prescribed burning and seeding be experimented with to improve the critical bighorn sheep ranges, and that management be aimed at increasing bighorn sheep numbers substantially.

3. That because of the poor condition of the range, the apparent reduction in productivity caused by overgrazing in some areas, and the slow rate of vegetal recovery because of low rainfall, that livestock grazing be substantially reduced from the existing situation. Reliable range trend transects should be established to document changes that result from any grazing action to facilitate the decision-making in the future.

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