## STATEMENT on the BIG DESERT EIS BY Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society

The Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society recommends that alternative four be selected for the Big Desert Planning Unit, instead of the proposed action. The Proposed action would convert 18,000 acres of sagebrush to grass and add 82.5 miles of fence. This could have serious consequences for antelope since this is an extremely important antelope area. Excessive fence construction could cause serious problems for migrating antelope. We do not believe the proposed action will result in the increases in antelope and sage grouse populations predicted in the EIS. Alternative four will allow a substantial increase in domestic livestock grazing without excessive destruction of wildlife habitat.

We feel that the proposed action is fiscally irresponsible since it recommends spending \$1,758,000 to increase grazing by 48,044 AUM's, an average cost of \$36.60 per AUM gained. Alternative four would cost only \$654,000 to increase grazing by 46,289 AUM's, an average cost of \$14.14 per AUM gained. The 1755 AUM's gained in the proposed action over alternative four would cost \$1,103,000. This is an average cost of \$628 each. At the present grazing fee of \$2.31 per AUM it would take 272 years to pay for the extra AUM's gained by the proposed action over alternative four. The net result is a 150% increase in spending to achieve a grazing increase of 4% over alternative four. The proposed action also calls for 150% more yearly maintenance costs than alternative four. If any costbenefit ratio is applied, alternative four is clearly preferrable to the proposed action.

We understand that brush control in the Big Desert is necessary, and support the burning projects. Burning usually leaves a mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas and can be beneficial to wildlife populations if done correctly. Plowing and seeding or spraying and seeding are generally detrimental to wildlife populations because brush is nearly eradicated in the treatment areas. We feel that chaining and seeding is a better treatment measure because it allows some brush to be left for wildlife while increasing grass for domestic stock. In the EIS the BLM does not appear to have considered the use of chaining and seeding. This is a true multiple-use management practice as called for in the Organic Act. Plowing and seeding is basically a single-use management practice.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on this EIS.

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## BIG DESERT EIS COSTS

	Proposed Action	Alt 3	Alt 4	
Existing use	43,641	43,641	43,641	
Proposal use	59,917	65,217	59,917	
20 Year AUM	91,685	92,430	89,930	
20 Year Gain	48,044	48,789	46,289	
Gain over Alt 4	1,755	2,500		
Cost	1,758,200	2,238,900	654,600	
Cost/AUM gained	36.60	45.89	14.14	
Cost over Alt 4	1,103,600	1,584,300		
Cost/AUM over Alt 4	628.83	633.72	633.72	
Years to pay for AUM gained @2.31 AUM	272	274	4	
Yearly maintenance	27,000	27,000	10,300	

	Proposed Action	Alt 3	Alt 4
Fence miles	82.5	82.5	32
Pipeline miles	37	38	15
Wells	9	9	3
Reservoirs	3	3	3
Troughs	36	36	15
Tanks	25	25	4
Cattleguards	12	12	7
Road miles	8	9	5
(Burning) Brush control acres	70,500	116,086	58,200
Bc and seed acres	18,000	34,713	4,800
Existing use	43,641	43,641	43,641
Proposed use	59,917	65,217	59,917
20 year AUM	91,685	92,430	89,930

## BIG DESERT EIS IMPACTS

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