

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240  
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January 16, 2003

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EMS TRANSMISSION 01/28/2003  
Instruction Memorandum No. 2003-071  
Expires: 09/30/2004

To: All SD's (except ESO)

From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject: Eliminating Grazing Permit Renewal Backlog

DD: 02/05/2003

**Program Area:** Grazing Administration

**Purpose / Background:** As a result of several decisions issued by the Office of Hearings and Appeals, the BLM issued considerable guidance in 1999 and 2000 which established policy and processes for renewing grazing permits and leases. At the same time, a "spike" in permit expirations in 1999 and 2000 occurred, which resulted in a backlog of expired permits that needed to have these processes completed. The guidance for renewing permits has been strongly linked to completing evaluations of land health standards.

Since Fiscal Year (FY) 1999, in order to avoid disruption to livestock grazing operations dependent on public land permits, Congress has annually legislated a means to continue authorizing livestock grazing while the Bureau analyzes environmental impacts, and completes appropriate consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Congress has also annually provided additional funds to complete the administrative processing needed to renew expired permits.

In response to Office of Management and Budget concerns, the Washington Office issued guidance in FY 2000 that required States and Field Offices to fully process all expired 1999 and 2000 grazing permits by the end of FY 2001, with a few specified exceptions. In that guidance, fully processed was identified as completing adequate environmental impact analysis and appropriate consultation in accordance with the Endangered Species Act.

In FY 2000 AWP directives, the Bureau began emphasizing processing of expiring grazing permits upon the completion of land health standards evaluations in priority watersheds with significant resource use conflicts or issues. This strategy was meant to provide the opportunity to more effectively analyze cumulative impacts of livestock grazing in a watershed, to more logically provide adequate consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service, to give the field opportunity to collect up-to-date information to use in NEPA documents, to focus range improvements and management changes on areas with the greatest need, and to more evenly distribute permit renewals through the 10-year cycle. This strategy was dependent on the annual Congressional action, which allowed the emphasis to change from processing permits based on administrative expiration dates to addressing resource issues in high priority watersheds. All States developed a 10-year schedule for completing assessments of land health standards in accordance with guidance provided in 1998, and have been given direction through the AWP to update the schedule each year since.

In response to a July 2002 informal request for information, each State sent a schedule projecting the full processing of expiring grazing permits through FY 2010. Several States indicated that by 2010, there would still be a carryover of permits which were not fully processed, including some from 1999 and 2000.

### **Policy/Action:**

It has been and remains BLM policy that States are to complete land health standards evaluations on at least 10 percent of the livestock grazing lands under their jurisdiction each year until the assessments are complete. The information collected during the assessment and evaluation of land health standards can be used to complete NEPA documents. Therefore, by the end of FY 2009, all carryover grazing permits shall be fully processed using the information from the land health standards evaluations as needed to complete environmental impact analysis. By the end of FY 2009, all permits should be fully processed in the year they expire. Even though permits and leases have been renewed for 10 years in accordance with appropriations language, full processing will not be deferred to the end of that 10-year period, but will be completed by end of FY 2009.

To comply with this policy, to prepare for briefings with OMB representatives and to provide information for the Secretary's budget testimony to Congress scheduled for mid-February, State Directors are to review the information provided in response to the informal request, correct the items not in compliance with this policy, and complete the attached Table. It is critical that the information provided by the States, especially expiring permit numbers, match those records in RAS, as RAS is the BLM's official data base for authorizing livestock grazing on public lands.

The Table should reflect your State's timing for fully processing all grazing permits which expired in FY 1999 and FY 2000 by the end of FY 2004, excepting grazing permits in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument; the full processing of all carry over permits by FY 2009, and the full processing of permits in the year they expire by FY 2010.

Return the completed Table to Dick Mayberry by Lotus Notes no later than February 5, 2003.

**Time Frame:** Effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Minor.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** None

**Coordination:** This Instruction Memorandum was coordinated between WO 220 (Rangeland, Soils, Water, and Air Group), and WO 880 (Budget Group).

**Contact:** If you have any questions regarding this policy contact Richard Mayberry at (202-452-7750) Rangeland, Soils, Water, and Air Group.

Signed by:  
Aaron G. Horton  
Acting, Deputy Assistant Director  
Renewable Resources and Planning

Authenticated by:  
Robert M. Williams  
Policy and Records Group, WO-560

1 Attachment

[1 - Grazing Permit Backlog Elimination Schedule \(1 p\)](#)