**From:** Dave Kimble
**To:** Wes Sibert
**Subject:** RE: Habitat Lease Draft
**Date:** Friday, March 01, 2013 4:12:24 PM
**Attachments:** Habitat Lease Draft.doc
map.pdf

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Hi Wes,

Here is an updated map and my comments on the Habitat Lease Draft. I have a lot more questions than answers right now as to how to make this all work together with the WRP easement. Things such as the stocking rate on non-WRP will be a judgment-call between you and WLCI, as it is their money and they can decide what they think is appropriate for their lease. But it will also be invaluable to have Oakley's input on that.

I am sure we will be able to work something out that will work for you and WLCI, while still falling in line with the WRP Compatible Use Agreement. We just have to figure out the details. 2013 may be a tough year with the strictness of the CUA requirements. Hopefully some flexibility on the WRP can be introduced in 2014 and beyond on the WRP, but we will just have to see how the land and plants respond in 2013. It would sure help if we'd get some snow!

Have a good weekend.

Dave Kimble
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-----Original Message-----
From: Wes Sibert [mailto:wessibert@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 10:46 AM
To: David Kimble
Subject: Habitat Lease Draft

Dave,

Here is copy of the Habitat Lease Draft I have been working on. I just used the CUA as a template. The stocking rate I came to was a happy medium between 50% NRCS stocking rates AUMs(which are already conservative) and 50% of the historical stocking rates AUMs of the property.

One thing that could be real helpful is if you could revise it and add a map of the property boundaries and pasture names along with potential monitoring sites. (under section c local description)

Another thing I would like to mention somewhere is that the NRCS may executed a 406 easement in the Northeastern part of the property. That would not affect the habitat lease but would only bring an even more conservative practice to that portion of the property. The easement

practice on the 406 acres would supersede the habitat lease for that portion of the property. The rest of the property would still function under the habitat lease. (Remember the habitat lease goal was always to surround the easement, fill in the gaps so to speak)

One thing to keep in mind this is pilot project and Justin really wants it to be something that does not prevent the landowner from running an agricultural operation. Give the landowner a little bit more say than some of the more rigid programs the various government agencies offer.

Thanks,

Wes

# Habitat Lease Uinta County, WY
# WLCI, USFW, Siberts

| | |
|---|---|
| County: Uinta<br>Fort Bridger, WY | Lease Terms: $ per year for a 5 year period.<br>Expiration: December 31, 2017 Renegotiable at that time |

A. Person Responsible for Habitat Lease Activities (Name, Address, & Tel No.)
Wesley Sibert, 3102 County Road 217, Fort Bridger, WY 82933 (307-780-5299)

B. Purpose:

To improve the overall habitat area of private lands through a moderate livestock grazing plan that will increase plant diversity and vigor. Grazing will be applied in a manner so as to encourage the growth of desirable vegetation while suppressing undesirable vegetation and maintaining adequate forage and cover for wildlife species.

C. Location Description (Attach a copy of map showing approximate area of compatible use.):

This habitat lease includes portions of four pastures: the Swanson (northeast) pasture, Three-Mile (southeast) pasture, the Pivot (southwest) pasture , and the Reservoir (northwest) pasture. An isolated 40 acres of BLM is surrounded by the pastures. 1112 deeded acres plus additional BLM lands will be effected under this habitat lease.

**Comment [DK1]:** My GIS calcs come up with 1195 ac + BLM. Will need to rectify discrepancy

About 416 acres of the property in the Swanson and Three-Mile Pastures is enrolled in the NRCS's Wetland Reserve Program, which will only allow livestock grazing through a Compatible Use Agreement. For 2013, the Compatible Use Agreement will allow grazing at stocking rates and in seasons that will mesh with this Habitat Lease. The stocking rates and seasons allowed in the Swanson Pasture and Three-Mile Pasture under the Compatible Use Agreement in 2013 are more conservative and allow less flexibility than will be allowed under this lease (see attached WRP Compatible Use Agreement).

D. Beginning Condition of Site:

The site is a combination of uplands and wetland areas within the same field boundary, creating some management difficulty. To a large degree, the uplands are currently in a degraded state whereas the lowland/wetland areas receive less grazing pressure which could eventually lead to undesirable accumulation of herbaceous thatch and less plant diversity within the site.

E. Statement of Effect and Compatibility:

Numerous studies have documented that livestock grazing, when managed appropriately, can maintain or improve habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. Because of the nature of the land, many wildlife species will benefit from the habitat lease, including both wetland species and upland species. Most notable species include migratory birds, sage grouse, mule deer and antelope. This piece of land is essential winter habitat for mule deer. Because most of the deeded ground is irrigated, an excess accumulation of thatch would accumulate

quickly at the site in the absence of regular disturbance. Livestock grazing has been chosen as the tool to enhance the habitat through disturbance.

A specific habitat enhancement that will be accomplished through this Habitat Lease on the approximately 818 non-WRP land will be an increase in herbaceous residual cover to improve greater sage-grouse nesting cover and mule deer forage in all seasons.

The proposed stocking rates are sufficiently conservative in the Swanson and Three-Mile Pastures (50% of standard AUM stocking rates) that significant residual cover will remain throughout the grazing period, regardless of when they occur relative to the nesting season. We expect about 6 inches of residual cover post-grazing in most of the wetland areas, with more at some specific locations. This may not be the best habitat for species that prefer very short vegetation, but this type of habitat is already available on neighboring lands.

Currently, the WRP Compatible Use Agreement will not allow livestock grazing in Swanson or Three-Mile pastures from May 15 to July 15. This will force most use of these pastures to be in the late-summer to fall. However, if the CUA changes in 2014 and beyond, the general strategy in Three-Mile Pasture, which contains the Three-Mile Creek riparian area, will be to graze early in the season (i.e. May-June) to discourage cattle concentration in the riparian area and discourage cattle utilization of shrubs.

We should insert more goals for the Pivot and Reservoir pastures, which I'm sure will focus on upland plant health and improved habitat for sage grouse and mule deer. Let's discuss this as a group, but probably the main strategies will be to maximize plant rest (non-grazing) time for the grasses to encourage recovery.

Specifics for 2013

There will be 4 pastures that contain that the Habitat Lease will apply to : the Swanson pasture, Three-Mile pasture, The Reservoir Pasture, and the Pivot Pasture.

**Comment [DK2]:** Is the Swanson pasture going to be divided in 2013, as shown on the map?

| Pasture | Acres | NRCS AUM Stocking Rate | 50% NRCS Stocking Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Swanson | 322 | 418.6 | 209.3 |
| Three-Mile | 326 | 232.4 | 116.2 |
| Pivot | 328 | 172.1 | 86.05 |
| Reservoir | 229 | 39.6 | 19.8 |
| TOTAL | 1205 | 862.7 | 431.35 |

**Comment [DK3]:** What will be the stocking rate for the pivot if it is irrigated and cropped? What about just irrigated and grazed? I have not kept up-to-date with what you are doing with the pivot

*The producer feels the NRCS AUM stocking rates to be very conservative. Actual historical data shows the land has ran a lot more AUMs. The producer has historically ran an average of 330 yearling for 5.5 months for the last 2 years (1452 AUMs) and before that the property ran 220 pairs for 6 months (1518 AUMs) for the past 20 years. The producer also feels that the reservoir pasture and pivot pasture NRCS AUM rate could be reevaluated to show a rate closer to 90 and 200 AUMs, respectively. The pivot was not producing when the range was evaluated.

The NRCS Compatible Use Agreement prohibits grazing from May 15 to July 15 on the WRP easement and will allow 325 AUMs to graze in 2013, or 150 yearlings to graze for 2.7 months. This is assuming the landowner does no fencing of the non-WRP acres in the Swanson or Three-Mile pastures into separate units.

**Comment [DK4]:** I am using AU equivalent of 0.8 for yearlings, as that was what was used in the CUA. We will have to decide what to use consistently.

The stocking rate and season of grazing could change in 2014 and beyond, as the Compatible Use Agreement is only authorized for 2013. Using 2013 as a basis for planning, the 150 yearlings would need an additional 2.3 months or 276 AUMs to complete a 5 month grazing season in the Pivot and Reservoir pastures.

One of the main components of the habitat lease is to reduce grazing by 50% in order to improve wildlife habitat. Fifty percent of NRCS stocking rate is 431.35 AUMs and 50% of the actually historic stocking rate is 759 AUMs. It is our objective that the stocking rate for this Habitat Lease fall somewhere between these 2 figures.

Plans are for 150 yearling cattle to graze the pastures for 5 months in 2013. The yearling cattle average grazing weight will be 650lbs. this has an animal unit (AU) equivalency of 0.70. 150 yearlings equate to 105 AU, amounting to 525 AUM over a 5 month period. This falls well within the 50% target stocking rate.

What will be the monitoring targets for the WLCI lease? For the WRP CUA, it is 6 inches of stubble in the wetland areas. This may not be appropriate for the WLCI lease, as the WLCI lease is focusing on the non-WRP, non-wetland areas.

(See attached monitoring plan for details on proposed monitoring methods.)

**Comment [DK5]:** With these calculations, we have a major challenge making the numbers work. If using a 0.7 AU equivalent, there are 3.1 months in the 3-Mile and Swanson pastures. Then 1.9 months, or 200 AUMs are needed in the Pivot and Reservoir pastures. This would be just a little under 100% of the NRCS stocking rate, using Oakley's 2011 numbers. Maybe this will change, with adjusting for irrigation on the pivot.

**Comment [DK6]:** What months can you graze the Pivot pasture, due to crops being grown? With the WRP in place, there is obviously a need for grazing from May 15 to July 15. However, the Reservoir pasture doesn't have many AUMs to provide, with the current numbers.

**Comment [DK7]:** NRCS typically uses 0.8 for yearlings. But maybe this number is more accurate?

F. Special Conditions, Specifications and Other Details Including Input Received From FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agencies.

A small acreage of the pivot will not be cropped and left as residual cover and grazing for wildlife

The habitat lease will be visited annually for the length of the contract, which is 5 years, for necessary changes if needed. The Habitat Lease may then be renewed as it is meeting the purpose and intent.

The Uinta County Conservation District has recommended that grazing periods be kept short in duration to reduce repeated grazing events on preferred plants before plants have had adequate time to recover.

The FWS has recommended that some conservative grazing be allowed on recently constructed wetlands and to maintain vigorous vegetation. Due to the woody vegetation on Three-Mile Creek, early-season grazing is preferred in that field, as permitted in conjunction with the WRP CUA.

The local WY G&F biologist supports allowing reduced amount of grazing on the tract and recommended against late fall and winter grazing when big-game, mainly deer, are heavily dependent on the area. This property is some of the best big-game winter range in the area. The game WY G&F department will also work with landowner to discourage an winter activities such as "shed hunting" that can cause stress on wintering mule deer.

Landowner or Representative (Signature, Date):_____

Approved (USFWS Coordinator Signature, Date):_____

Approved (WLCI Coordinator Signature, Date):_____

Approved (UCCD Range Manager Signature, Date):_____

# Sibert Habitat Lease

- The locations drawn on the above map are approximate. Exact monitoring sites will be established in the field.
- Although the boundary is not shown on the map, the monitoring sites are inside the deeded property boundary.
- We are proposing 5 monitoring sites, but these could eventually be pared down to 2 or 3 if monitoring over time shows that some sites can be eliminated

**Comment [DK8]:** WLCI will want to establish its own monitoring sites outside the WRP easement area with its own targets. Let's discuss in the meeting.

## Short term monitoring

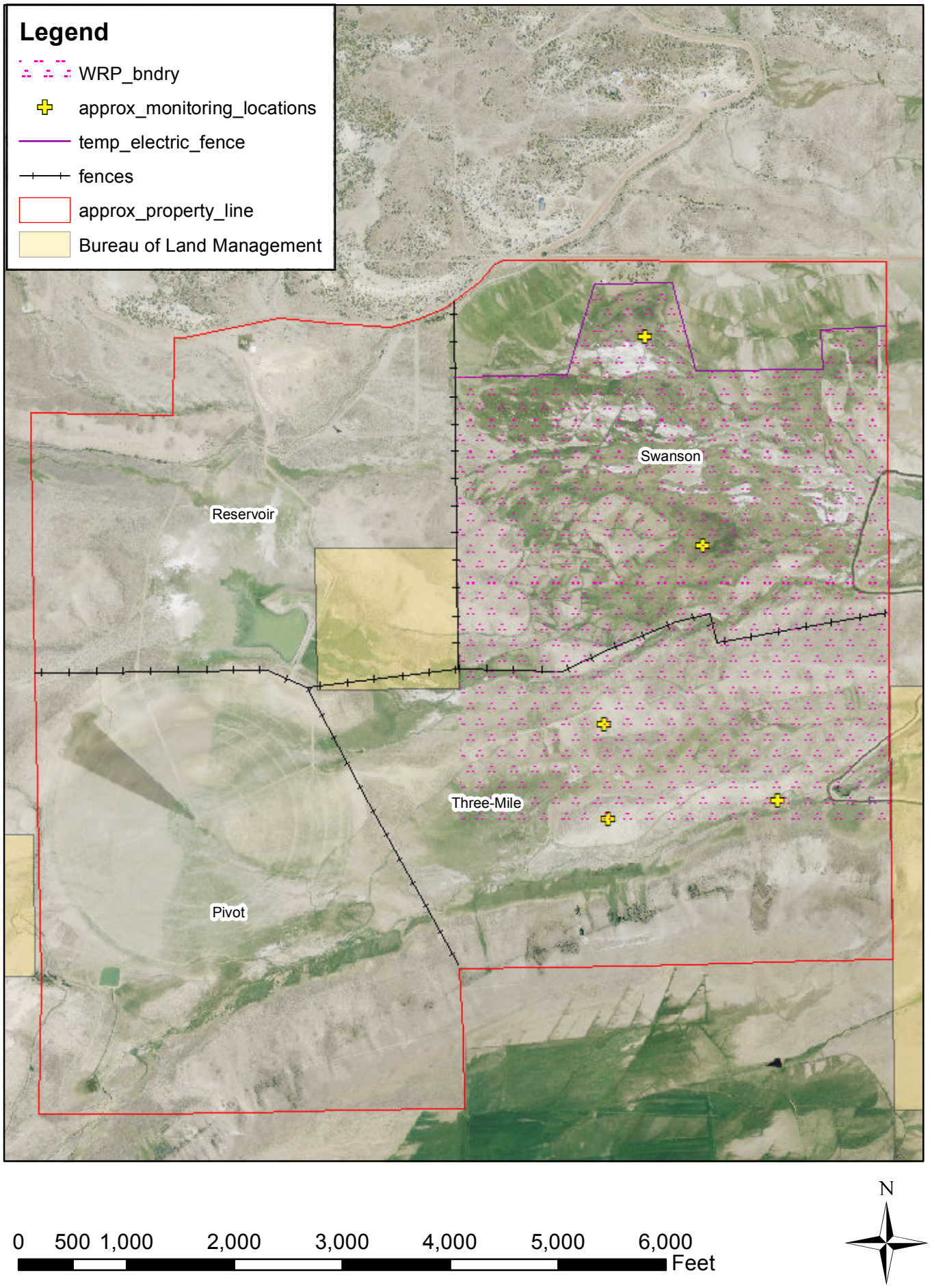
- The primary purpose of the short term monitoring is to track stubble heights and ensure that the grazing at the stocking rates prescribed is of benefit.
- In addition, collection of short term monitoring data over time will provide a long term trend of approximate livestock utilization and stubble heights at the end of the grazing season

1. Swanson (northeast pasture)
    - Repeatable photopoints with an established bearing at all sites
    - The Wyoming BLM-USFS Key Species utilization method will be used, modified to fit the site and our monitoring goals
        1. Establish permanent transect bearing and measure stubble height, grazed/ungrazed, for a plant every 3 steps
        2. Total = about 50 plants and 150 meter transect at each site
        3. Avg. stubble height and approximate % utilization can be calculated from this method
    - Avg. stubble height will be the quantitative measurement used to determine whether or not the cattle need to be(or should have been) moved off early

2. Three-mile (southeast pasture)
    - 2 upland monitoring sites and 1 riparian monitoring site on Three-mile Creek
    - Repeatable photopoints with an established bearing at all sites
    - The same key species utilization method as being used in the Swanson pasture will be used at all 3 sites in Three-mile pasture
    - % of willow leaders browsed will be measured at the riparian monitoring site if we determine there are enough willows to measure at the time of establishing the monitoring site
    - Avg. stubble height on the upland monitoring sites will not be used as a "move cattle trigger point" because of the unpredictability of how the vegetation is going to recover over time and variable precipitation
        - However, stubble height and utilization will be measured in the uplands to document that the uplands are not being over-utilized by livestock

## Long term monitoring

- Compilation of multiple years of stubble heights, utilization, and photopoints will be sufficient long-term monitoring for the wetland (Swanson pasture) and riparian (Three-mile pasture) sites
- Line-point-intercept transects will be established at the upland monitoring sites in Three-mile pasture to track changes in % bare ground and % plant species composition over the long term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Bureau of Land Management
Swanson
Reservoir
Three-Mile
Pivot
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