

# **Request for Proposals (RFP)**

## **Conservation Grazing Lease**

Date: 1/27/2014

Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
Kern County, California



Proposals Due:  
**February 28, 2014**

To:  
Proposal for Grazing Lease  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
PO BOX 5839  
Ventura, CA 93005

Point of Contact:  
Ken Convery  
805-644-5185 ext 296  
[ken\\_convery@fws.gov](mailto:ken_convery@fws.gov)

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**PART – I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

**A. Introduction**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge (BCNWR), is seeking proposals from qualified individuals to provide resource management services in the form of cattle grazing. Bitter Creek NWR is mostly located in southwestern Kern County, approximately 10 miles south of the community of Maricopa in the foothills above the San Joaquin Valley (Appendix A).

The qualified operator will have the interest and experience to cooperate in achieving objectives to protect and enhance Refuge grasslands (Appendix B) while promoting ecologically sound conditions to support a diversity of migratory birds and special status plant and animal species and their habitats. The Service seeks to manage Refuge grasslands to achieve a mosaic of habitat structure and floristic diversity.

**B. Scope of work**

This Request for Proposals (RFP) relates to one (1) grazing lease at Bitter Creek NWR for approximately 1,565 acres of annual, non-irrigated grassland. The grazing capacity of the lease is estimated to be approximately 691 Animal Unit Months (AUM) over an initial 3-month term (AUMs are based on the forage requirements of one 1,000-lb grazing animal). The Service reserves the right to adjust AUMs or halt use to protect the resource at any time.

The initial lease offer will be from approximately October 15, 2014 to January 15, 2015 in management units 9 Central and 9 West (Appendix C). Target conditions for these management units are specified in Table 1. As described in the Bitter Creek NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Grazing Plan ([http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bitter\\_Creek/what\\_we\\_do/planning.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bitter_Creek/what_we_do/planning.html)), additional grazing opportunities may be available in future years. Both of these documents are recommended reading.

The Lessee will be responsible for maintaining water infrastructure, fences, and gates. The Service will maintain roads, fuel breaks, and purchase needed materials for equipment repair and replacement, and may offer a method to reimburse Lessee for improvements of infrastructure (see Notable Lease Terms). All facilities will be operable and in good working condition at the lease start date. (See Part IV, Appendix C, and Appendix D for additional information about infrastructure).

Table 1. Available cattle grazing units at Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, including acres to be grazed, estimated Animal Unit Months (AUM), and target conditions for Residual Dry Matter (RDM) and grass height. Turn in/out dates, within the range below, are flexible as long as target conditions can be achieved. Dates and AUMs provided are subject to change. Pre-grazing RDM values estimated in October, 2013: 9 West – 989 lbs/acre; 9 Central – 1,855 lbs/acre.

Unit	Acres	AUM <sup>1</sup>	Turn in/out dates	Target Conditions	
				RDM (lbs/acre)	Grass Height (inches)
9 West	597	178	10.15.2014/1.15.2015	300-600	1-4
9 Central	968	513	10.15.2014/1.15.2015	800-1,000	6-8

<sup>1</sup>AUMs calculated as [9 West]: (((989-450)\*0.5)\*597)/900 = ~178 AUM & [9 Central]: (((1855-900)\*0.5)\*968)/900 = ~ 513 AUM, where (((estimate RDM-Target RDM)\*grazing efficiency factor)\*acres)/lbs consumed in 1 month by AU.

C. Lease pricing

The rate for this lease will be \$9.36/AUM. An AUM is defined as one Animal Unit Equivalent (AUE) grazing for one month. For the purpose of this lease, one Animal Unit (AU) is considered to be one mature cow, two years old and above, dry, or including a nursing calf less than 6 months of age. AUE values are:

<b>Animal Kind and Class</b>	<b>Animal Unit Equivalent (AUE)</b>
Cow, dry	1.00
Cow, with calf	1.00
Bull, mature	1.35
Cattle, one-year-old	0.60
Cattle, two-year-old	0.80

Modified from Grazing Handbook – A Guide for Resource Managers in Coastal California  
(<http://www.carangeland.org/images/GrazingHandbook.pdf>)

D. Eligibility and minimum qualifications

The Service is seeking grazing applicants with the flexibility to adapt their grazing operations to unpredictable meteorological and ecological conditions while striving to achieve target conditions as described in Table 1. The successful applicant will possess, at minimum, the following qualifications:

- 1) Five years (full-time equivalent) experience in a leadership role of a livestock grazing operation in California annual grasslands.
- 2) Two years (full-time equivalent) direct experience managing livestock on rangelands managed for wildlife habitat and/or special status plant species.
- 3) Current rancher on private land or grazing lease holder on public land.
- 4) Own or have legally binding contract to own, by the application deadline,  $\geq 230$  head of cattle. Proof of ownership will be required of selected Lessee.
- 5) Ability and willingness to graze for the total length of time and recommended stocking rate or until target conditions are achieved (Table 1).
- 6) Ability and willingness to maintain necessary fencing, corrals, gates, and water infrastructure.
- 7) One or more representatives must be located close enough and possess the physical and logistical capabilities to respond to unexpected livestock-related incidents within 4 hours.
- 8) Ability to provide an initial deposit of 10% of the anticipated total fee.
- 9) Applicant must not have been delinquent on any prior stipulations on private or public land.

**PART – II: INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS**

A. Required meeting & property tour

Applicants are required to attend a property site visit prior to submitting a proposal. Site visits for interested operators will be conducted in February at Bitter Creek NWR (see dates in RFP process schedule, below). Proposals will not be accepted from operators that did not attend *one* site visit. Transportation to and from the Refuge will be the responsibility of the interested operator(s). Contact Ken Convery (805-644-5185 ext. 296 or [ken\\_convery@fws.gov](mailto:ken_convery@fws.gov)) to schedule a site visit.

B. RFP process schedule (all dates are in calendar year 2014)

- 1) Site visits will take place on February 1, February 6, and February 12.
- 2) Proposals must be **post-marked by Friday, February 28** to be considered eligible.
- 3) All proposals will be opened on the same day.
- 4) If deemed necessary, the Service may conduct interviews.
- 5) Lessee selection will be announced by March 21, 2014.
- 6) Deposits will be returned, via registered mail, to those applicants not selected.
- 7) Lease finalization and negotiations will be conducted in April and/or May, 2014.
- 8) Lease will commence in October 2014.

C. Submission of written questions

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to [ken\\_convery@fws.gov](mailto:ken_convery@fws.gov) and received no later than February 14, 2014. Questions will be addressed in an addendum to this RFP and posted on the internet at [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bitter\\_Creek/what\\_we\\_do/resource\\_management/grassland\\_management](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bitter_Creek/what_we_do/resource_management/grassland_management) no later than February 19.

D. Submission of required documents

Eligible livestock operators meeting the minimum qualifications listed above are encouraged to submit proposals. Proposals will include a cover letter (optional, but recommended), a completed application (Appendix F), proof of insurance, and a deposit, and must be post-marked prior to the submission deadline.

Mail proposals to:

Proposal for Grazing Lease  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
P.O. Box 5839  
Ventura, CA 93005

**PART – III: BASIS OF SELECTION**

A. Selection process

The selection process will proceed as follows:

- 1) Receipt and review of proposals, including qualification requirements.
- 2) Proposals that meet the minimum qualifications will be forwarded to the Service's Selection Committee for further evaluation.
- 3) Applicant interviews (if deemed necessary by the Service).
- 4) Ranking of the most qualified applicants based on submitted proposals.
- 5) Recommendation of applicant to the Refuge Manager for approval.

B. Selection criteria

The Selection Committee will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria (listed in no specific order):

1. Operational capacity, including the documented ability to:

- Provide livestock, as well as supplies, equipment, and labor for successful enterprise operations.
  - Operate with flexibility in stocking rates, grazing period, and class of livestock to accommodate seasonal fluctuations in forage availability as well as specialized grazing treatments.
  - Allocate financial resources to fund the required maintenance until any corresponding reimbursements, previously approved by the Service, are made by the Service.
  - Support rangeland management assessment, planning, and monitoring efforts.
  - Maintain rangeland grazing infrastructure including watering systems, fencing, and corrals.
2. Experience with grazing management programs focused on conservation which demonstrates:
- Ability to manage grazing to maintain and improve habitat for a particular group of targeted special-status species.
  - Ability to manage grazing to target pest plants and/or enhance native vegetation.
  - Positive working relationships and collaboration with public or private landlords leasing rangelands to be grazed for conservation purposes.

C. Interview

Proposers may, at the Service's sole discretion, be asked to participate in an interview to evaluate the Proposer's skills in conservation grazing management, problem solving, project management, communication, and judgment. Any interviews will occur only after the proposal evaluation process described in the preceding section has been completed, and will have a separate evaluation process.

D. Administrative conditions

- This request does not commit the Service to pay any costs incurred by respondents in the preparation or submission of proposals resulting from this RFP.
- Submitted proposals will not be returned to respondents unless explicitly requested (deposits will be returned).
- The Service reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. The determination of qualifications is solely with the Service.
- The Service reserves the right to conduct discussions with any applicant if it is deemed necessary for understanding, clarity, or negotiations.
- The Service reserves the right to contact references in order to assess past performance and qualifications.
- There will be no more than one Lessee selected.
- There will be no proposal preference privileges.

E. Notable lease terms

Below are summaries of selected lease terms that applicants should note in considering proposal submission. Additional significant conditions are set forth Appendix E.

The resulting lease will be for an initial three (3) month term. This lease is not subject to extension; however, the Service may offer further grazing opportunities beginning in the fall of 2015 and may offer priority to previous permittees, subject to the tenant's performance. Extension term lease rates will be reviewed based on livestock and grazing lease market

conditions as well as site conditions, including conditions of livestock facilities and grazing management and property stewardship requirements.

The resulting lease may offer a method to reimburse Lessee for improvements and other services, agreed to and approved in advance, at approved compensation rates. These activities are likely to include tasks associated with improvements to grazing-related infrastructure, targeted grazing services, debris removal, and rangeland monitoring. All potentially reimbursable work will require prior written authorization and will be inspected upon completion to ensure conformance to Service standards and specifications. Reimbursement will only be issued upon completion and inspection of the work.

The successful respondent and any subcontractors will be required to maintain insurance policies with the following coverage limits. Respondents will be required to endorse the Service as an additional insured on said insurance policies.

Workers' compensation and employer's liability:

Contractors are required to comply with applicable Federal and State workers' compensation and occupational disease statutes. If occupational diseases are not compensable under those statutes, they shall be covered under the employer's liability section of the insurance policy, except when contract operations are so commingled with a contractor's commercial operations that it would not be practical to require this coverage. Employer's liability coverage of at least \$100,000 shall be required, except in States with exclusive or monopolistic funds that do not permit workers' compensation to be written by private carriers.

General liability:

- (1) The contracting officer shall require bodily injury liability insurance coverage written on the comprehensive form of policy of at least \$500,000 per occurrence.
- (2) Property damage liability insurance shall be required only in special circumstances as determined by the agency.

Automobile liability: The contracting officer shall require automobile liability insurance written on the comprehensive form of policy. The policy shall provide for bodily injury and property damage liability covering the operation of all automobiles used in connection with performing the contract. Policies covering automobiles operated in the United States shall provide coverage of at least \$200,000 per person and \$500,000 per occurrence for bodily injury and \$20,000 per occurrence for property damage. The amount of liability coverage on other policies shall be commensurate with any legal requirements of the locality and sufficient to meet normal and customary claims.

Following Lessee selection, priority infrastructure improvements, stewardship activities, and mechanisms and rates for reimbursement will be negotiated and finalized. The lease will be fully executed and provisions in place to initiate livestock operations in October of 2014.

## **PART – IV: MORE ABOUT BITTER CREEK NATIONAL WILDIFE REFUGE**

### **A. Description of Management Units Offered in this Lease**

Unit 9 West is comprised of 597 fenced acres (Appendix C). The area is characterized by rolling grasslands ranging in elevation from approximately 2,900 ft. to 3,200 ft. The dominant grass species is red brome (*Bromus madritensis*), with subdominant species including ripgut brome

(*Bromus diandrus*), wild oats (*Avena fatua*), and soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*). While no roads bisect this unit, there are 7 gates that provide access to Highway 166 to the West and Hudson Ranch Rd (formerly Cerro Noroeste Rd) to the North. There is one spring-fed water trough in the far southeast section and 2 gates leading to unit 9 Central.

Water may be available for use in portable water troughs (to be furnished by permittee), if necessary, and approved by the Refuge Manager.

Unit 9 Central is comprised of 968 fenced acres (Appendix C), not including a fenced private inholding of approximately 75 acres. The elevation ranges from approximately 3,000 ft. to 3,700 ft. The area is characterized by rolling grassland in the northeast and southwest sections and 2 parallel canyons in the central section. The dominant grass species is ripgut brome, with subdominant species including red brome, wild oats, and soft brome. A maintained interior dirt road in the southern section provides access to a spring, 3 water tanks, 1 water trough, and a dilapidated (non-functional) corral and loading chute. Three additional water troughs are located along Hudson Ranch Rd, which borders the unit to the north and east. Seven gates provide access to Hudson Ranch Rd and another 2 gates provide access to Unit 9 West.

Water is available for use in portable water troughs (to be furnished by permittee), if necessary.

#### B. Location and Adjacent Land Management Agencies

The Refuge is located adjacent to other conservation lands (Appendix A) administered and managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM, Carrizo Plain National Monument), US Forest Service (USFS, Los Padres National Forest), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG, Elkhorn Plain and Carrizo Plain), The Nature Conservancy (Carrizo Plain), Wildlands Conservancy (Wind Wolves Preserve), and the Tejon Ranch Company. These agencies and private organizations manage habitats for diverse native plants and wildlife, including local endemic species; endangered, threatened and special status species; and migratory birds. Habitat management in this area, including vegetation management, control of invasive plant species, and reduction of hazardous fuels, includes a multitude of activities that involve planning and partnerships to implement.

#### C. Refuge Grazing Infrastructure

Bitter Creek NWR as a whole is crisscrossed by approximately 49 miles of road (9.5 miles are paved; 39.5 miles are dirt/gravel). Hudson Ranch Road, which bisects the refuge for approximately 7.5 miles and runs southeast from State Route 166/33, is the longest stretch of paved road. Klipstein Canyon Road (~1 mile) and the approximately 1 mile of State Route 166/33 that intersects the northwestern corner are the only other sections of paved road within the refuge. Dirt and gravel roads provide reliable access to key portions of the refuge west of Bitter Creek Canyon in the dry season; however, access to areas east of the canyon is restricted to four-wheel drive vehicles even in the dry season. Roads are often impassable in the winter and after rain events.

Bitter Creek NWR has an intricate and expansive water system of 22 water tanks, fed by several springs, and nearly 10.5 miles of pipeline. There are cattle troughs associated with many, but not all, of the tanks. Metal corrals exist in the center of the refuge, approximately 1.25 miles from Hudson Ranch Road.

#### D. Land Use History

The Bitter Creek area was first settled by European homesteaders in the late 1800s. For much of the time since, the area was used for cattle grazing. After its establishment as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1985, Special Use Permits authorizing grazing on approximately 9,200 acres on the main portion of the refuge were issued annually by the Service between about 1985 and 2004. That permit expired on September 30, 2005, and the Service has not issued any additional permits covering this portion of the refuge since that date.

When the permit for grazing the main unit was in place, lower elevations were grazed during winter/spring from December 15 to June 15, alternating with higher elevations from June 15 to December 15. The base herd could not exceed 370 animal units (forage consumption on the basis of one standard mature 1,000-pound cow, either dry or with calf up to 6 months old) at any one time, for a maximum of 4,400 AUM.

#### E. Climate and Weather

Bitter Creek NWR, situated in the upper foothills at the southwestern corner of the San Joaquin Valley, is located within the "California Dry Steppe Province" according to Bailey's Life Zones. This life zone is characterized by hot, dry summers and mild, foggy winters. Temperature extremes may climb above 100 degrees F in summer and drop below freezing in winter. Precipitation levels peak December through April. Annual average temperature near the refuge ranges from a minimum of about 42 degrees F to a maximum of about 72 degrees F based on average climate conditions from 1971-2000. The lowest temperatures occur in December (ranging from a monthly minimum of 33 degrees F to a monthly maximum 58 degrees F), and the highest temperatures occur in July (ranging from a monthly minimum of about 55 degrees F to a monthly maximum of about 90 degrees F). The lowest temperature on record is 15 degrees F at the Maricopa, California, weather station in December 1978, and 8 degrees F at the Lebec station in January 2001. The average daily temperature in winter is 48.5 degrees F, and the average daily minimum temperature is 38 degrees F. In summer, average daily temperature is 80.7 degrees F, and average daily maximum is 94.8 degrees F. The highest temperature on record is 116 degrees F at the Maricopa station in July 1950.

Weather can vary considerably on the refuge, depending on the elevation and specific site. Higher elevations, especially above 4,000 feet, are relatively cool and receive more moisture; snow is common during winter storms. Lower sites, particularly in Bitter Creek Canyon, which range down to 1,600 feet, are warmer, receive less moisture, and rarely receive snow. North-facing slopes are cooler and wetter than slopes with other aspects. Annual precipitation near the refuge is 9.82 inches per year based on average climate conditions from 1971-2000, with the lowest precipitation occurring in July (average of 0.01 inches) and the greatest precipitation occurring in March (2.17 inches). About 80% of precipitation generally occurs from November through March.

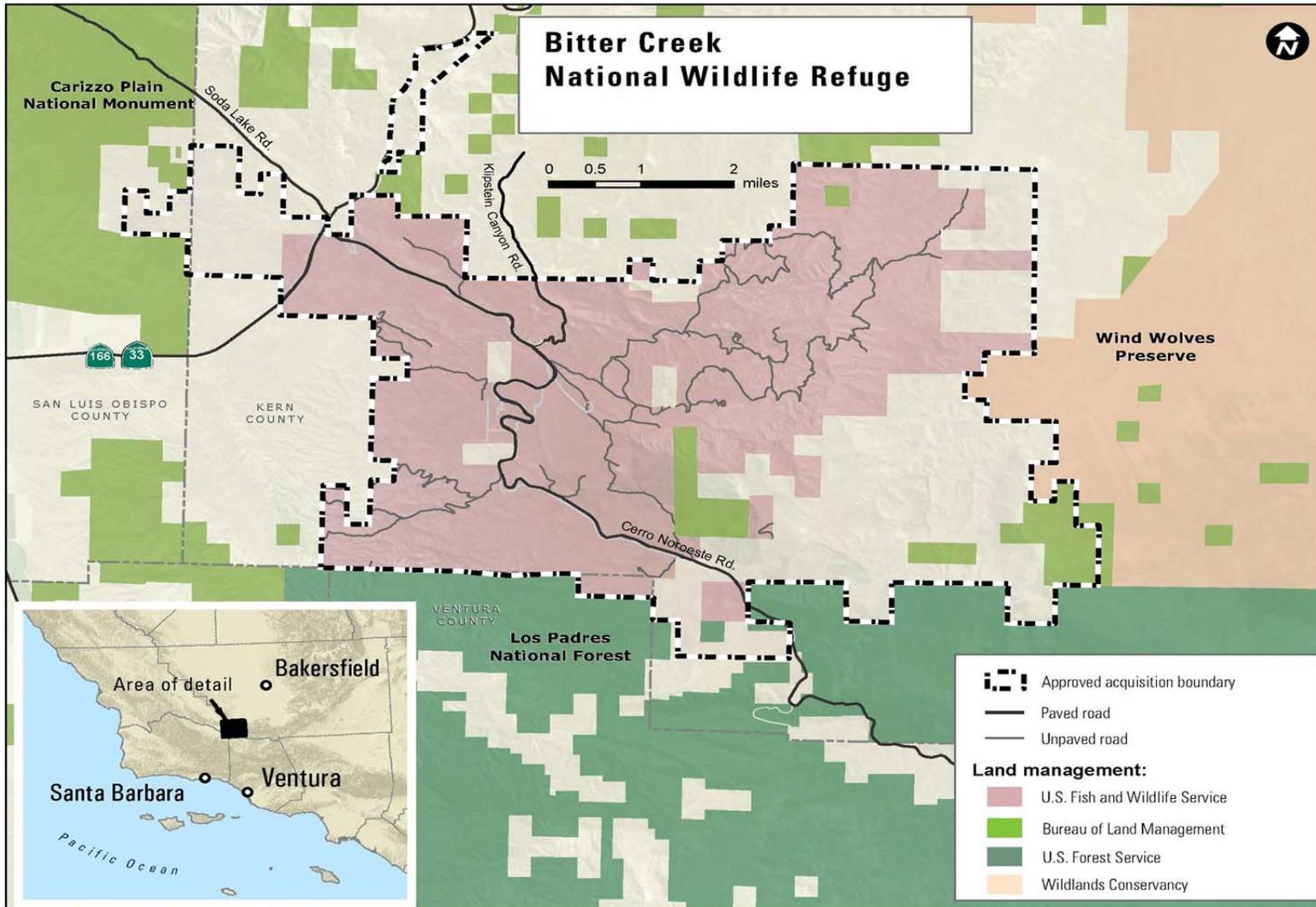
#### F. Vegetation

Bitter Creek NWR is composed of at least 14 landcover types, including but not limited to California naturalized annual and perennial grassland (annual grasslands), California perennial grassland (perennial grasslands), central and south coastal California seral scrub (shrublands) dominated by California buckwheat, bush lupine, goldenbush and rubber rabbitbrush, mixed saltbush scrub, and oak and juniper woodlands (Appendix B). Annual grassland, dominated by non-native annual grasses of Mediterranean origin, is the most abundant vegetation, covering more than 9,000 acres. Common grass species within the California naturalized annual and perennial grassland include red brome (*Bromus madritensis* subsp. *Rubens* [*Bromus rubens*]), soft

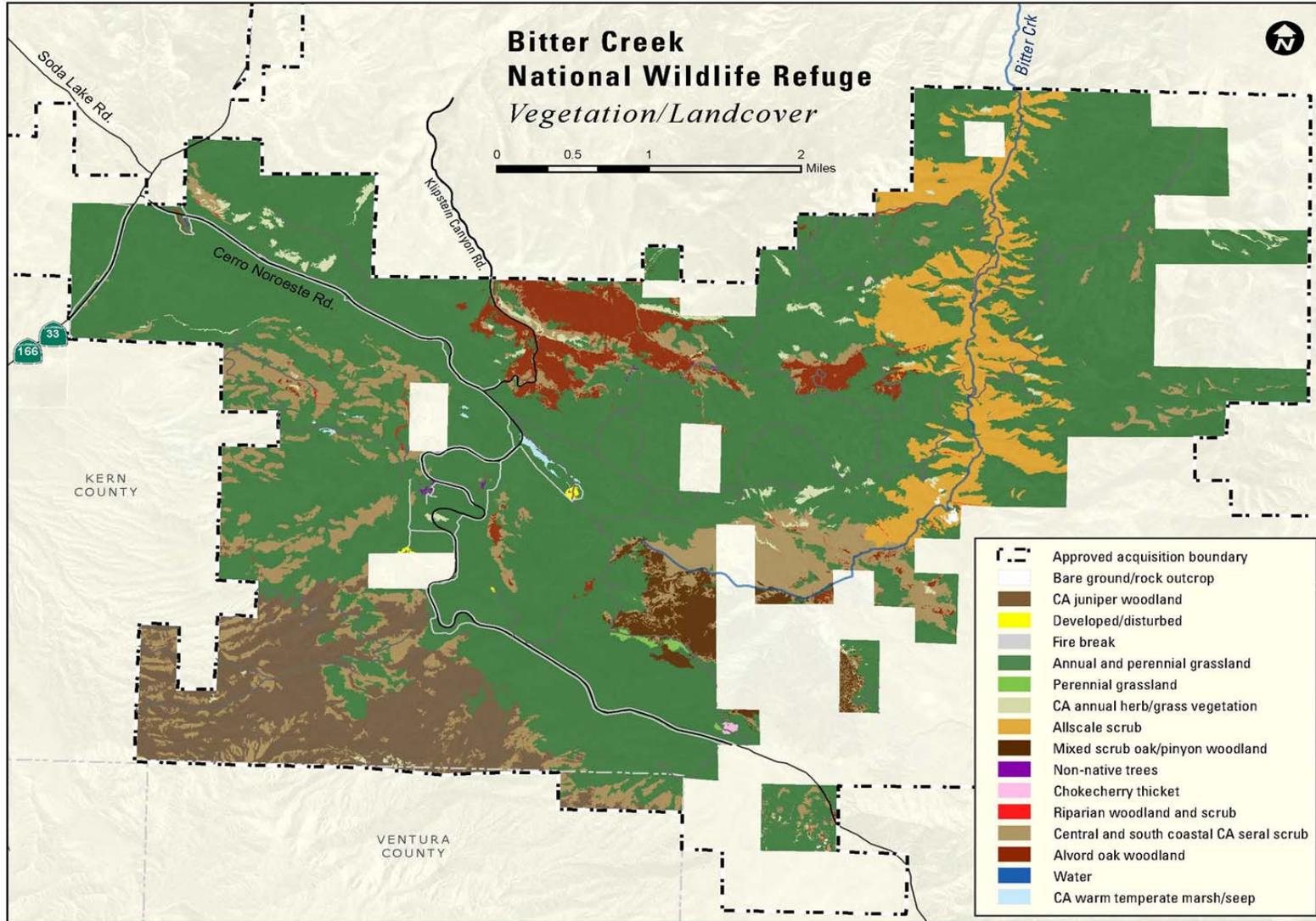
chess (*Bromus hordeaceus* [*Bromus mollis*]), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus* [*Bromus rigidus*]), typical California brome (*Bromus carinatus* var. *carinatus*), wild oats (*Avena barbata* and *Avena fatua*), cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), and smoothbarley (*Hordeum murinum* subsp. *Glaucum* [*Hordeum glaucum*, *Hordeum stebbinsii*]).

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A. Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, SW Kern County, California, and surrounding land management agencies and organizations.



Appendix B. Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge vegetation and landcover classifications.



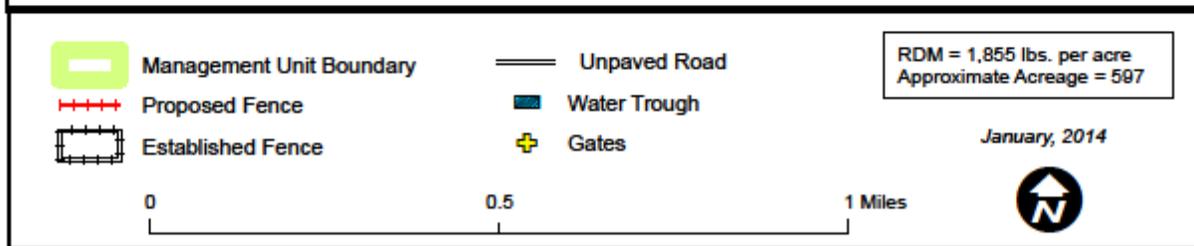
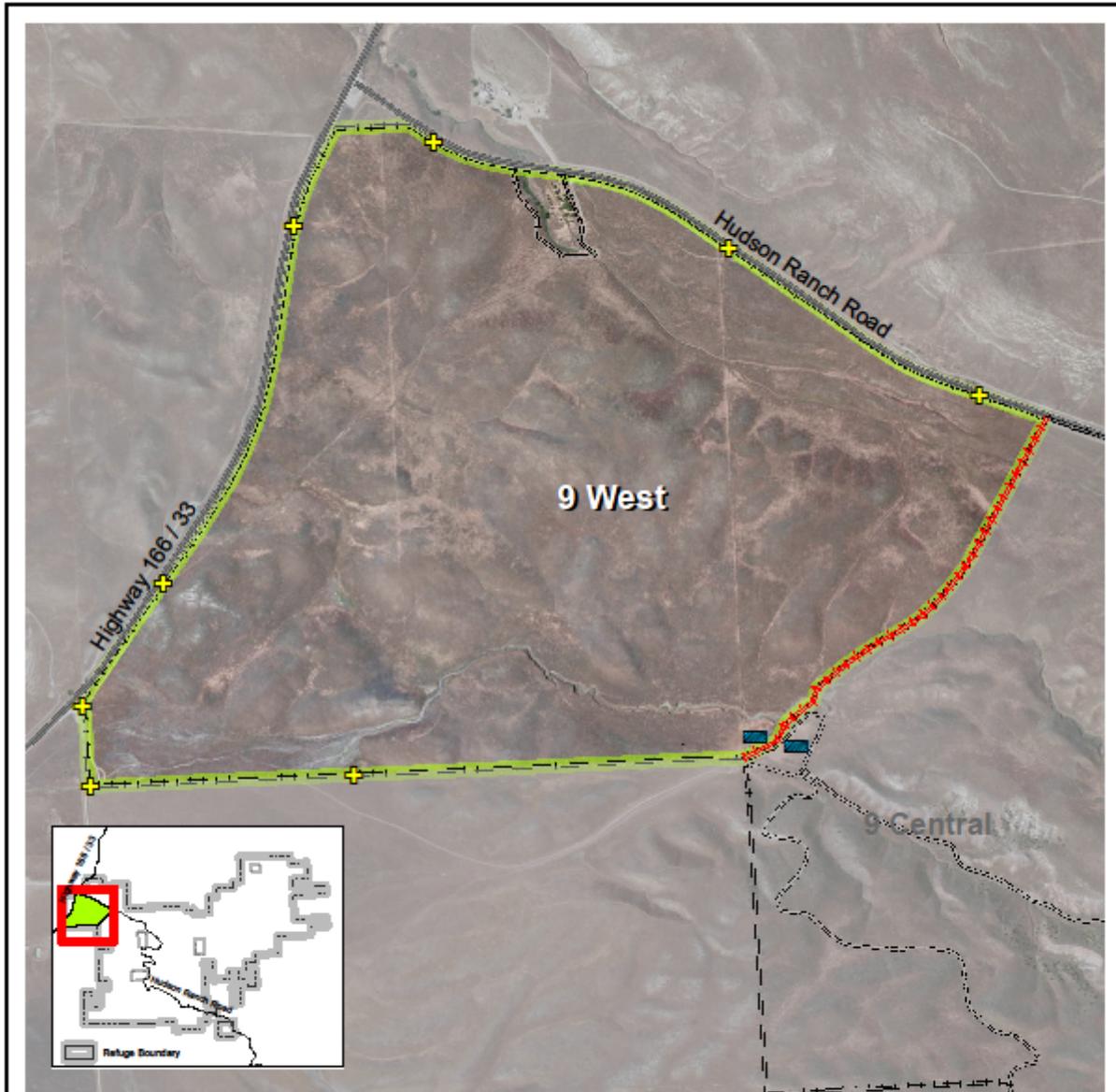
Appendix C. Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge management units offered in this grazing lease. Proposed fence will be constructed prior to commencement of lease.



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

**Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge**

**Management Unit: 9 West**



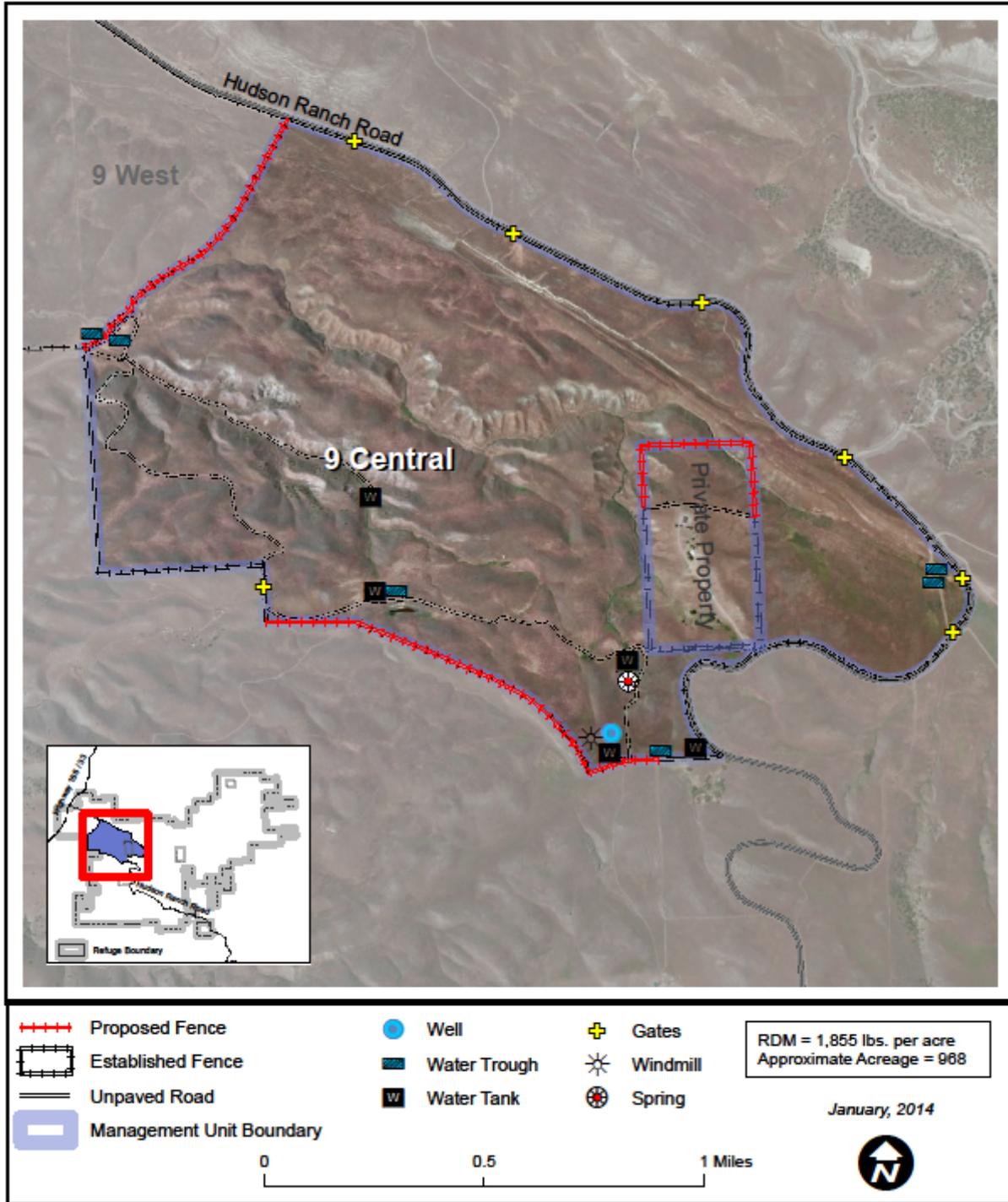
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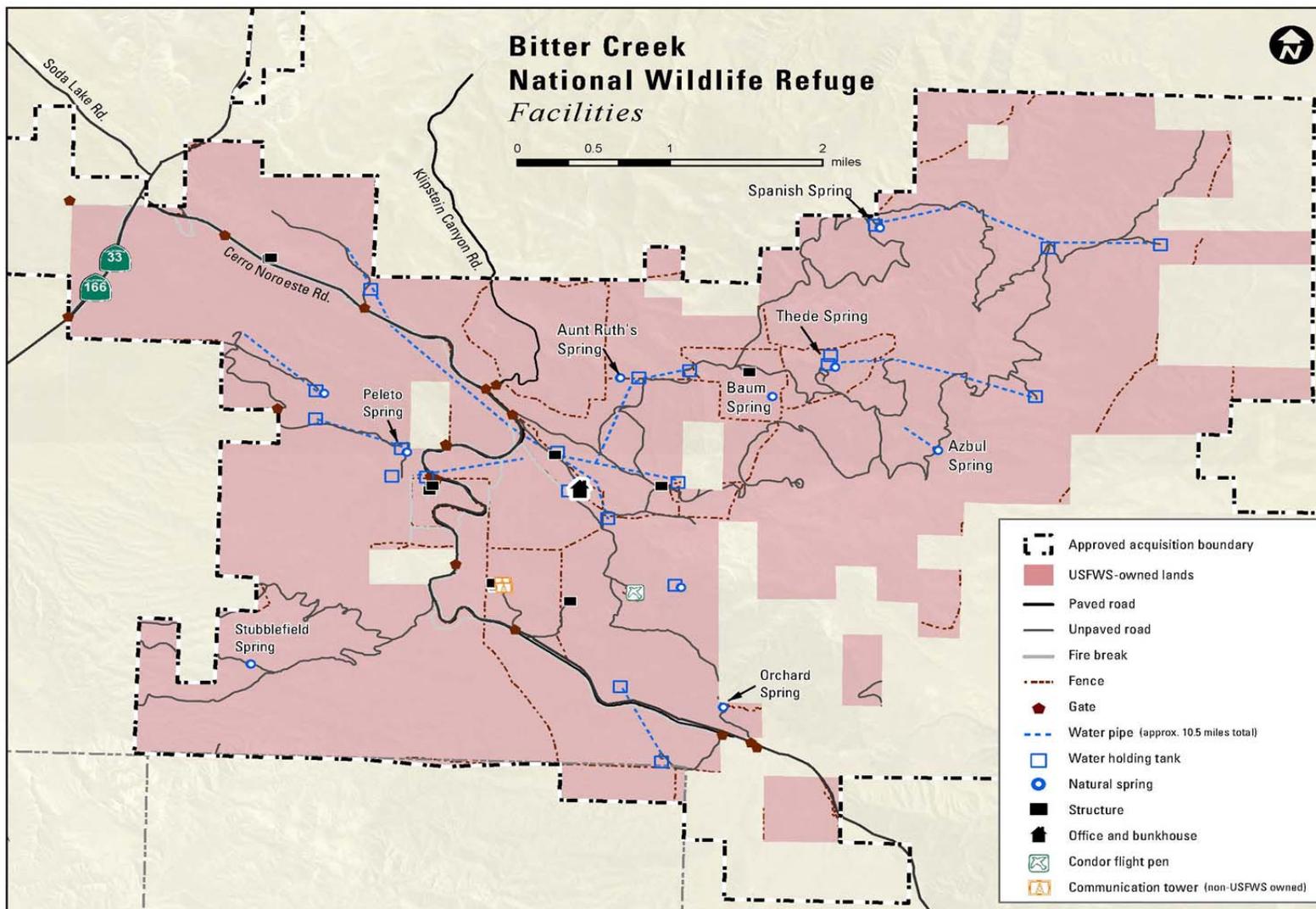
**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

**Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge**

**Management Unit: 9 Central**



Appendix D. Current water and other infrastructure facilities at Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Additional fencing will be installed by spring 2014 to separate the western portion of the refuge into 3 grazing units (9 West, 9 Central, and 9 South, Appendix C).



**Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
Conditions of  
Special Use Permit**

1. The period of use will be from October 15, 2014 to January 15, 2015. Stocking rates, periods of use and turn-in and turn-out dates are subject to change by the Refuge Manager during the term of this permit due to variable forage conditions and management needs for refuge habitat. Failure to comply with the provisions of the Special Use Permit (SUP) constitutes a breach of the SUP and may result in revocation of the SUP.
2. Motor vehicle travel (e.g., trucks, cars, heavy equipment, motorcycles, ATV) is restricted to existing roads. The only exceptions are to access animals in need of medical attention and for facilities repair. Otherwise, walking and horseback are the only accepted modes of transportation off-road.
3. The Permittee must be able to document ownership of the cattle, which will be marked with a brand by the age of 6 months. The Permittee must provide the Refuge Manager with descriptions of brands on cattle grazing the Refuge. This information will be included in the "Record of Payments" block of the Special Use Permit.
4. The Permittee must get prior approval from the Refuge Manager for using pesticides on cattle that are on the Refuge or will be on the Refuge at any future time. After gaining approval, the name of the pesticide will be included in the "Record of Payments" block of the Special Use Permit.
5. The Permittee must comply with State of California health and sanitation requirements. If a disease is suspected or known to exist within the livestock on the Refuge, the Permittee must inform the Refuge Manager immediately.
6. Grazing will be restricted to designated areas of the refuge. Stocking rates and grazing time periods are dependent upon availability of forage and habitat management objectives as determined by the Refuge Manager. The Permittee will be responsible at all times for containing cattle within the permitted areas on the Refuge.
7. The Permittee will notify the Refuge Manager within 5 days of changes in cattle numbers and/or their locations (including movements between grazing units on the Refuge and on or off the Refuge property). An accurate record of these movements will be provided upon request to the Refuge Manager.
8. The Permittee will be responsible for maintaining all existing facilities that are used for the grazing program including: fences, gates, corrals, watering systems, etc. This includes maintaining the area around water troughs so they do not become too eroded and rutted. The government will provide the materials for maintaining those facilities; however, the Permittee must request all such materials in advance from the Refuge Manager. The provision of materials is contingent upon availability of funds. No repairs will be started without first obtaining approval from the Refuge Manager. Hiring of repair professionals by the Permittee must be pre-authorized by the Refuge Manager. Permittee shall provide U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with all receipts and other documentation regarding the costs of approved repairs, and the Refuge Manager will determine the amount to be deducted from the Permittees grazing fees to compensate the Permittee for such repairs. Costs for unauthorized repairs or improvements are to be borne by the Permittee and will not be deducted from the grazing fees owed to the Service.
9. The Permittee will only use existing, or construct portable (temporary), structures on the Refuge. No temporary structures will be permitted without the prior written consent of the Refuge Manager. No new permanent structures are allowed. All structures constructed or placed on the Refuge become the property of the Service unless determined otherwise by the Refuge Manager in writing.

10. No supplemental feeding is allowed on the Refuge except under the following circumstances: feeding of cattle confined to corrals, feeding of cattle when inclement weather conditions make natural forage unavailable (e.g., snow, not drought), feeding of molasses-based protein supplements, and the use of salt and mineral supplements. The molasses-based protein and salt and mineral supplements must be placed at least one quarter of a mile from the nearest source of water and in under-utilized areas.
11. Any use of mechanized equipment on the Refuge by the Permittee must be approved by the Refuge Manager prior to commencement of work. The Permittee is responsible for ensuring that cattle do not access areas closed to grazing, including all fenced riparian areas and all designated sensitive areas.
12. The Permittee is authorized to access only those areas open to grazing; all areas not open to grazing are off limits.
13. The use of lead bullets to euthanize cattle is forbidden on the Refuge. Only the use of non-lead ammunition is allowed.
14. The Refuge is closed to the public. Only authorized individuals conducting activities relating to grazing services and facilities maintenance are permitted on the Refuge.
15. The Permittee is not authorized to change, alter, or interfere with a contractor conducting business with or on behalf of the Service. Any concerns must be directed to the Refuge Manager.
16. Water systems, springs, and water courses may not be altered or changed without prior written consent of the Refuge Manager.
17. The Permittee must immediately notify the Refuge Manager of suspected trespass events (e.g., fences cut to allow unauthorized access).
18. Domestic animals on the Refuge, such as dogs used in moving cattle, must have current vaccinations and be in control of the owner at all times.
19. Any failure to comply fully with the above conditions may result in the revocation of this SUP. Failure to comply with the SUP may also result in denial of future SUPs.
20. Prior notice to cancel the SUP must be provided, by either party, at least 6 months in advance.

Appendix F. Required Information – Application, Background and Qualifications

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**APPLICATION FOR CONSERVATION GRAZING LEASE**

**Notice: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501, et seq) And the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) please be advised that:**

1. The permitting of economic and public uses on lands of the National Wildlife Refuge System is authorized by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668 dd-ee) and the Refuge Administration Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460 k-n), implemented in regulations in 43 CFR 24.3 and 50 CFR subchapter C.
2. The application form will be used by Service personnel to evaluate the qualification and to conclude the eligibility of the applicant.
3. Routine use disclosures may also be made (1) to the U.S. Department of Justice when related to litigation or anticipate litigation; (2) of information indicating a violation or potential violation of a statute, regulation, rule, order or license to appropriate Federal, State, local or foreign agencies responsible for investigating or prosecuting the violation or for enforcing or implementing the statute, rule, regulation, order or license; (3) from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from a Congressional office made at the request of that individual (42 FR 19083; April 11, 1977).
4. The information requested in this application form is purely voluntary, but failure to answer questions may jeopardize the eligibility of individuals to receive permits.

**Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
P.O. Box 5839  
Ventura, CA 93005  
805-644-5185**

**TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT**

APPLICANT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant is encouraged, but not required, to submit a cover letter to accompany this application.**

**Applicant may, if desired, answer any or all questions on a separate sheet. Please reference questions numbers (e.g., I.A.) when providing answers.**

**I. Qualifications.** Please answer the following questions:

- A. How many years of experience do you have managing, in a leadership role, livestock grazing operations in California annual grasslands?
- B. How many years of experience do you have directly managing livestock on rangelands *managed for wildlife habitat and/or special status plant species*?
- C. How many head of cattle, by type and age, do you *currently own* or will have legally binding contract to own, by the application deadline?
- D. How many head of cattle, by type and age, will you have a legally binding contract to own by October 15, 2014 (if different from 'C,' above)?
- E. Are you a current rancher on private land or a grazing lease holder on public land?
- F. Are you willing and able to graze for the total length of time and recommended stocking rate or until target conditions are achieved (whichever comes first)?
- G. Are you willing and able to maintain necessary fencing, corrals, gates, and water infrastructure?
- H. Are you or have you been delinquent on any prior stipulations on private or public land? If so, please explain.

**II. Narrative.** Please provide a brief narrative for each of the following:

- A. Describe your business operation and areas of specialization and expertise:



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D. Describe your experience using grazing to benefit special status species. Specifically, how did you use grazing to benefit a special status species (which species)?:

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E. If, because of drought or another uncontrollable circumstance, this grazing opportunity was reduced or revoked, where would you move your cattle? Describe the impacts on your operation:

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- F. Describe how you would collaborate with the Service to meet its objectives related to threatened and endangered species conservation, migratory bird habitat management, and pest plant control:

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- G. Describe how you would determine that your livestock are healthy prior to being introduced to Service property, and ensure that they remain so throughout the lease period:

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**III. Livestock Operating Experience:** Please provide information for each property that you currently graze. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Property 1:

- a) Location and size (acres):
  
  
  
  
  
- b) Description of rangeland/vegetation/topography:
  
  
  
  
  
- c) Season of use:
  
  
  
  
  
- d) Specific wildlife or plant habitat objectives:
  
  
  
  
  
- e) Number and type of livestock grazed:
  
  
  
  
  
- f) Name and contact information (telephone, email) of land owner or property manager:

Property 2:

- a) Location and size (acres):
  
  
  
  
  
- b) Description of rangeland/vegetation/topography:
  
  
  
  
  
- c) Season of use:
  
  
  
  
  
- d) Specific wildlife or plant habitat objectives:
  
  
  
  
  
- g) Number and type of livestock grazed:
  
  
  
  
  
- e) Name and contact information (telephone, email) of land owner or property manager:

Property 3:

- f) Location and size (acres):

- g) Description of rangeland/vegetation/topography:
  
- h) Season of use:
  
- i) Specific wildlife or plant habitat objectives:
  
- h) Number and type of livestock grazed:
  
- j) Name and contact information (telephone, email) of land owner or property manager:

**IV. Employee staffing and operation:**

A. List all key personnel and employees involved in your livestock operation that may include job title, job description, years of experience, and area(s) of expertise. Include relevant certifications, education, and specialized training if applicable. Indicate who the main point of contact will be for day to day operations and describe best methods for contact and availability.

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B. Describe the need for site presence and how often you and/or employee(s) plan to be on the property.

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C. Describe the availability and expected response time (minimum and maximum response time, in minutes or hours) of the operator or employees of the operator, in the event of an emergency, such as a livestock/human conflict, sick or injured livestock, cattle on a roadway, etc.

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D. Describe how (techniques and frequency) you will monitor range health conditions in each grazing unit?

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E. Have you ever worked with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service? If so, where, when, and who was/is your primary contact?

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- V. References:** Please provide information for three (3) professional references from three (3) different external agencies, clients, or landlords who have extensive knowledge of your grazing operation. At least one (1) reference should come from a representative from a local, state, or federal government agency. All references should be available to be contacted and willing to discuss proposer's qualifications.

Reference 1:

- a) Name:
- b) Affiliation:
- c) Address:
  
- d) Phone/email:
  
- e) Description and location of property grazed:
  
- f) Length of time or dates the property was grazed:
  
- g) Overall summary of working relationship:

Reference 2:

- a) Name:
- b) Affiliation:
- c) Address:
  
- d) Phone/email:
  
- e) Description and location of property grazed:
  
- f) Length of time or dates the property was grazed:
  
- g) Overall summary of working relationship:

Reference 3:

- a) Name:
- b) Affiliation:
- c) Address:

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- d) Phone/email:
- e) Description and location of property grazed:
- f) Length of time or dates the property was grazed:
- g) Overall summary of working relationship:

**VI. Deposit:** Submit a deposit of \$650 (10% of anticipated lease amount) in a check made payable to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

**VII. Proof of insurance:** Submit proof of insurance indicating minimum coverage limits specified in Part III, Section E of the RFP.

*I certify that I meet all qualifying standards and I have read, understand and agree to any special conditions associated with the Refuge use for which I make application.*

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*Applicant's Signature*

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*Date signed*