

Frequently asked questions related to the Request for Proposals (RFP), Conservation Grazing Lease, Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Kern County, CA**1. Can we shoot coyotes?**

While predator management was proposed as a potential tool in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Bitter Creek NWR, it will not be implemented prior to or during this initial lease. Predator management strategies may be undertaken only after refuge staff complete an integrated pest management plan.

2. Can you move cattle troughs so they're not so close to the proposed fence boundary, or move the fence boundary?

The proposed fence boundary between units 9 West and 9 Central will be constructed in such a way that the fence is >50 ft from each of the nearby troughs.

3. Can you move the proposed fence boundary between units 9 West and 9 Central so that the fence approaches the old corral?

Yes. Cattle will have access to this corral from Units 9 West and 9 Central.

4. Will you fix the old corral between Units 9 West and 9 Central?

The Service will cooperate closely with the selected operator to assess the need and feasibility of repairing or replacing this corral. For this and other projects, the operator may construct or repair facilities with prior written approval from the Refuge Manager. The Service would supply materials and the selected operator would deduct \$15.52/hr in labor (Kern County Wage Schedule Grade 5) from the annual grazing fees.

5. How will cattle be transported to the old corral? The existing road is too narrow for a cattle truck and trailer.

If trailering is not possible on the road leading down to the old corral between Units 9 West and 9 Central, or if this corral is inoperable, then cattle may be loaded and unloaded from the main corral east of the bunkhouse and may access Unit 9 Central via the cattle underpass under Hudson Ranch Rd. The Service will cooperate closely with the selected operator to assess alternative strategies, including the possibility of purchasing temporary corrals, as needed.

6. What is the rate of flow for the springs, and will there be enough water for all users?

The main spring, a shared water source, currently flows at a rate of approximately 3 gallons per minute; the Red Lake spring is reserved for refuge management (i.e., grazing management) only and currently flows at a rate of 2 gallons per minute. Flow may be increased when the springs and water lines are cleaned prior to the cattle turn-in dates. These springs have historically provided sufficient quantities of water for domestic and commercial users. In addition, there are

4 nearby springs or water wells that may be used for cattle in an emergency (although water would have to be hauled from these sites).

7. Is there a place to move cattle when the target is met?

When the target is met in a given management unit (i.e., residual dry matter and/or grass height is within prescription levels), cattle must be removed from that unit. Outside of this offering, no other areas of the refuge will be available for grazing between Oct 15, 2014 and January 15, 2015.

8. Could we put fewer cattle out for a longer period of time or start earlier?

This initial lease offer will be a maximum of 3 months in duration, beginning October 15. However, if the selected operator wishes to remove cattle prior to the lease end date, s/he may choose to do so if target has been achieved.

9. When and how often will you calculate RDM? Will the Rancher and/or Refuge staff do this?

Service personnel will sample and calculate RDM each fall. If the management unit is within prescription levels, grazing may be discontinued in that unit as conditions dictate. The Service will rely on the cooperation and experience of the selected operator to ensure that management targets are not exceeded over the course of this lease.

10. When the target has been met, how much notice will you provide to remove cattle?

The Service will rely on the cattle operator to ensure that target conditions are met and are not exceeded. However, the Service reserves the right to adjust AUMs or halt use to protect the resource at any time, in which case cattle must be removed within 10 days.

11. Do we need to have the insurance and proof of cattle ownership now?

The successful applicant will own or have a legally binding contract to own, by the application deadline of February 28, 2014, ≥ 230 head of cattle. In addition, the selected applicant will submit current proof of insurance indicating minimum coverage limits as specified in Part III, Section E of the RFP.

12. Is the lease rental rate negotiable?

The lease rental rate is non-negotiable for this initial lease but the Service may enter in lease rental rate negotiations or other agreements with selected operators for future leases.

13. Can I partner with somebody and fill out only 1 application?

Yes.