



March 2, 2021

Bureau of Land Management
Burns District Office
Jeff Rose, District Manager
28910 Highway 20 West
Hines, Oregon 97738

SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL

*Re: Bridge Creek Area Allotment Management Plan Scoping Comments (DOI-
BLM-ORWA-B060-2020-0001-EA)*

Mr. Rose:

We are writing to express our severe disappointment with the February 26, 2021 Secretarial Order rescinding the final permit issuance for the Bridge Creek Area Allotment Management Plan and remanding the permit back to BLM for continuation of the protest period. As one of the parties who protested immediately prior to the January 19th Secretarial Order and issuance of the final permit by BLM, we strongly believe the Order and final permit were sound and that the confusion over protest dates is not justification for rescission of the permit decision, particularly when there is already a pending appeal of the final permit in front of the Oregon District Court.

This letter marks the sixth time our organizations have written to your office in less than a year, urging timely reinstatement by BLM of the grazing permit previously held by Hammond Ranches, Inc. for 51 years. With each engagement with your office, we grow more concerned about the BLM's approach to this permit and the grave consequences BLM's continued actions regarding this permit and the associated delay will have for rangeland health, the local economy, and one of Harney County's longest standing ranch families.

Since BLM first wrongfully declined to renew the permit in 2014, our organizations have engaged to help ensure that the permit is restored to Hammond Ranches. While that should have occurred shortly after the original Secretarial Order in January 2019, BLM delayed more than a year prior to initiating the latest NEPA process to move the permit forward. In our first letter to you in April 2020, we urged BLM to timely initiate a clear and transparent process to restore the permit to Hammond Ranches, and to ensure that

turnout could proceed this spring. We are now in the month where turnout is scheduled, and BLM's actions are ensuring that turnout will not occur.

As we have stated several times in the past, the extended period of non-use due to the failure to renew Hammond Ranches' permit has created a significant fuel load that presents a risk to BLM's public lands, neighboring ranchers, and the numerous critical wildlife species found on the allotments. It is critical for the economic vitality of Harney County and the ecological health of the region that grazing be restored to these allotments immediately.

Hammond Ranches has long history of stewardship on this allotment. The rescission of Hammond Ranches' permit sets a very dangerous precedent for the hundreds of public lands ranchers across Oregon and the nation. Without the permit, Hammond Ranches will be unable to continue to operate their ranch and range improvements, manage their interspersed public land, and move forward with rebuilding their ranch. Rescission of the permit also risks neighboring ranches due to the building fuel load on private and public lands associated with the allotment due to lack of grazing.

We are very frustrated that despite all applicable factors supporting restoration of the permits to their family, and despite strong support from the community and a strong ecological need to restore grazing this season, BLM continues to take actions that risk the future viability of this ranch. While we recognize that the decision to restore the permit was made under the prior administration, Hammond Ranches has worked diligently since 2014 to restore their permit, has met all applicable criteria in the code of federal regulations, and all local ecological and environmental factors favor returning their cattle to the allotments this grazing season. Continued action of this sort is damaging the Harney County community, Harney County ecosystems, and a long-standing Harney County family. BLM can and must do better.

We urge the Burns District BLM to restore the Hammonds permit immediately and allow turnout this grazing season. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Anne Cooper
Vice President of Public Policy
Oregon Farm Bureau



Tom Sharp, President
Oregon Cattlemen's Association



Thurston "Rusty" Inglis, President
Harney County Farm Bureau

