

RANGELAND HEALTH AND BLM GRAZING PROGRAMS

FACTSHEET



The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers more 245 million acres of public land, which is more than any other federal agency. There are 155 million acres of leased grazing allotments.

Rangeland health – or Land Health Standards (LHS) - refers to the quality and sustainability of waterways, habitats, soil, flora and fauna on the range (43 CFR §§ 4180.1, 4180.2). Many factors impact rangeland health-- off road vehicles, drought, the spread of invasive species and fire. **However, BLM identifies livestock grazing as the most frequently cited cause of range failure.**

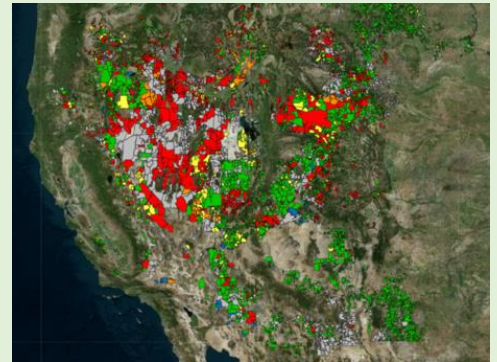
Findings

- BLM has assessed land health standards on approximately 108 million acres of grazed public lands. They have yet to assess nearly 41 million acres.
- Of the total acres assessed, 50% fail to meet LHS, totaling 54 million acres, approximately the area of Washington state.
- Of the lands that failed to meet LHS, the agency said that in 72% of cases a significant cause was livestock grazing – that’s approximately 40 million acres, roughly the size of Wisconsin, that are failing due to overgrazing.
- There is a massive allotment in Wyoming, over 950,000 public acres, that is identified as failing LHS and reports livestock grazing as a significant cause.
- The records reveal that many allotments have never been assessed, including a 1.4-million-acre allotment in Nevada.
- Wild horses are cited as “a significant disturbance factor” more than 50 times, but most frequently in conjunction with livestock.

MAPPING THE RANGE

Through multiple public record requests, PEER gathered the agency’s data from each state and every field office. PEER plotted the data from 21,000 allotments on one interactive map and created a visual compilation of the agency’s data on the rangeland health of each allotment.

PEER’s interactive map portal contains BLM’s most current land health standards status for approximately 155,000,000 acres of public lands, and a number of useful GIS layers for visualization, exploration, exploratory analysis, and download.



Scan the QR code
or visit
www.peer.org/mapping-the-range



- Much of the Greater Sage-grouse Priority and General Habitat Management Area lies within BLM allotments in ecoregions where more than 40% of lands assessed fail to achieve LHS due to livestock grazing.
- Additionally, a significant portion of the assessed lands that are "meeting" standards are actually only "making significant progress" towards meeting the standards, not actually meeting them.

BLM Allotment Statistics				
STATUS	Public land acres (from FOIA dataset)	Percent of all allotments	Percent of all assessed allotments	Percent of allotments failing LHS standards
ALL STANDARDS MET	54,553,776	36%	50%	
NOT MET - LIVESTOCK	39,059,868	26%	36%	72%
NOT MET - CAUSE NOT IDENTIFIED	4,509,463	3%	4%	8%
NOT MET - OTHER	10,601,121	7%	10%	20%
DETERMINATION NOT COMPLETE	40,751,988	27%		
OTHER	1,435,245	1%		
TOTAL WITH AREA & ALLOTMENT NUMBER (public acres)	150,911,461	100%		
TOTAL ASSESSED (public acres)	108,724,228		100%	
TOTAL FAILED (public acres)	54,170,452			100%

RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

Bureau of Land Management should:

1. Create a central BLM geodatabase containing rangeland health evaluation records. Combine and coordinate all of the agency databases so that it puts all the data to work.
2. Complete and update Land Health Standards evaluations. Many allotments have not been evaluated and many of the evaluations were completed ten years ago.
3. Commit to utilizing the data to make land use decisions. For example, if grazing has been determined to be a cause for failure, BLM can reduce livestock numbers or change the season of use. If the cause of failure is off road vehicles, the agency can limit permitting.
4. The agency can look at broader trends. For instance, there are field offices with unusually low allotment failure levels relative to others within an ecoregion. In six states, BLM has identified more than 40% of the lands as failing LHS. In contrast, in New Mexico just 2% of the assessed allotments are found to be failing.

USING THE INTERACTIVE MAP

Use the PEER map with Bureau of Land Management data and explore the different overlays.

- See the land health in relation to the current drought index or evaluate how allotments are assessed in sage grouse priority habitat management areas.
- Enter the name of any allotment into the search bar to see the documents that BLM provided. This often includes the number of livestock, the NEPA documents available, and any BLM assessments or AIM plots.
- Overlay the wild horse management areas and ecoregions over the allotments.
- Records can be queried and results explored in both tabular and GIS formats.