

2026 PROPOSED GRAZING REGULATIONS

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Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has [proposed sweeping changes](#) to the federal grazing regulations that govern livestock use on more than 155 million acres of public lands in the American West. These regulations determine who can graze livestock on public lands, how those lands are managed, and what happens when grazing harms wildlife habitat, streams, wetlands, and other public resources.

Among the most alarming changes is a significant reduction in public participation. The proposal narrows who qualifies as an "interested public" and removes many existing requirements for the BLM to consult with conservation groups, Tribal Nations, local communities, and members of the public about grazing decisions. Under the new rules, simply caring about public lands, wildlife, clean water, or rangeland health may no longer be enough to contribute to decisions affecting lands owned by all Americans.

The proposed regulations would also:

- Remove water quality standards from the federal rangeland health framework and eliminate existing mechanisms used to address grazing-related water quality problems.
- Replace the current system that requires prompt action when livestock grazing is causing land health problems with a new framework that makes it more difficult to hold grazing operations accountable for environmental damage.
- Restrict public lands grazing permits to "production-oriented livestock," further prioritizing private livestock production as the only purpose of public forage while creating new barriers for conservation-focused uses, including bison restoration.
- Reduce transparency and public input while expanding administrative flexibility for grazing permittees.

These changes come at a time when public lands across the West face mounting challenges, including declining biodiversity, degraded watersheds, invasive species, habitat fragmentation, and worsening drought. Livestock grazing is the most widespread commercial use of Bureau of Land Management lands, making these regulations among the most important rules governing the future of western public lands and wildlife.

Western Watersheds Project and WildEarth Guardians are [hosting a free webinar](#) on Tuesday, June 23, 2026 at 5pm MDT to provide an overview of the proposed rule, discuss impacts to wildlife and public lands, and explain how members of the public can participate in the comment process before the July 13 deadline.

Why It Matters

This proposal is about more than livestock grazing. It is about who gets a voice in the future of America's public lands and what values will guide their management.

Public lands provide habitat for hundreds of sensitive, threatened, and endangered species across the West, from sage grouse and native trout to desert tortoises, pygmy rabbits, pronghorn, and countless migratory birds. For many of these species, livestock grazing is one of the most significant land uses affecting habitat quality, water availability, stream health, and native vegetation.

By reducing public oversight, weakening accountability for land health problems, and removing important environmental safeguards, the proposed regulations could make it more difficult to address the very conditions driving biodiversity loss across the West. Degraded streams and wetlands can harm native fish and amphibians. Overgrazed riparian areas can eliminate critical habitat for migratory birds. The spread of invasive grasses can increase wildfire frequency and destroy habitat for species already in decline.

The proposal would also make it harder for conservation organizations, Tribal Nations, scientists, and members of the public to participate in decisions that affect wildlife and ecosystems on lands owned by all Americans. At a time when the West is facing an unprecedented biodiversity crisis, the Bureau of Land Management should be strengthening protections for public lands, not reducing transparency and public involvement.

Public lands belong to all Americans. The decisions made today will shape the future of wildlife, clean water, and western landscapes for generations to come.

How to Submit Comments

Deadline: July 13, 2026

1. [Visit the Federal Register docket](#)
2. [Use the online form with talking points included](#)

3. *Mail, personal, or messenger delivery:* U.S. Department of the Interior, Director (630), Bureau of Land Management, 1849 C St. NW, Room 5646, Washington, DC 20240, Attention: Acting, BLM Director.

Talking Points

Here are some of the top line items for the public to consider including in your comment letter to the BLM

1. **The proposed rule severely limits who can participate in grazing management decisions and dramatically reduces the number of actions that will actually require any public engagement at all.**
 - a. *I am concerned about how grazing on BLM managed lands will impact the things I care about most, recreation, wildlife, clean water, healthy lands, etc. The new rules will make it nearly impossible for me to know about what's happening on the land and to participate in any planning process that might take place.*
 - b. *The burden shouldn't be on the public to search out information about what the government is planning. Rather, if I express an interest in a particular area or value, the government should assume the responsibility and inform me about planned actions or changes to management that might impact my interests.*
 - c. *Public lands belong to all Americans, and my interests in public lands are no less important than those of livestock operations. I should have the same opportunity to know about, comment on, and protest or appeal management decisions. These proposed rules would create a system that favors one user group over everyone else.*
2. **The proposed rule changes the role of Land Health Standards in grazing management. Rather than requiring grazing permits and grazing decisions to conform with Land Health Standards, the rule removes them from the grazing regulations and treats them as a broader agency goal. As a result, grazing management would be less directly tied to measurable land health outcomes, reducing accountability when public lands are not meeting standards for healthy soils, vegetation, water quality, and wildlife habitat.**
 - a. *I am concerned that removing Land Health Standards from the grazing regulations will make it even more difficult to ensure that livestock aren't causing damage to public lands, wildlife, recreation opportunities, water quality and other values that are important to me as a public lands user.*
 - b. *I am also concerned that the proposed rule allows the BLM up to three years to take any corrective action after determining that grazing is contributing to land health failures. If livestock are harming public lands, wildlife habitat, streams, or other*

resources, the agency should act as quickly as possible to address the problem rather than allowing damage to continue for years.

- c. *Land health should continue to be measured and evaluated for each grazing allotment so that the public can understand what's happening on the ground in specific places. While watershed level assessments are important too, under the new rule, my favorite (choose your favorites: camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing) spots will be at risk even if the broad watershed is considered healthy.*

3. The proposed rule redefines grazing permits to only allow “production-oriented” livestock and removes longstanding references to conservation and stewardship from the grazing regulations. These changes shift the focus of public lands management toward maximizing livestock production rather than balancing grazing with other important public values, and specifically targets bison restoration and other conservation uses. This approach is inconsistent with decades of law, policy, and precedent recognizing that public lands should be managed for multiple uses including wildlife habitat, clean water, recreation, cultural resources, and healthy ecosystems.

- a. *As a public lands owner, I value the public lands for much more than their ability to provide the maximum amount of feed for private livestock. Conservation is an important and legally required use of public lands and I support the use of public lands by people that prioritize conservation and good stewardship over profit.*
- b. *Rather than restrict and make it harder for public land users to help conserve and restore public lands, especially those that have been damaged by livestock overgrazing, the BLM should be welcoming and encouraging conservation-oriented management practices.*
- c. *I am concerned that these changes to who can have a grazing permit and for what purpose will lead to even more overuse and overgrazing damaging the lands, waters, and wildlife that I care about as a public lands user and owner.*

4. The proposed rule emphasizes expanding grazing on public lands, even to areas that haven't been grazed for decades because of conflicts and past damage caused by grazing. Many of these so-called vacant allotments are important habitats for Threatened and Endangered species, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and rare native plants. The proposed rule directs the agency to shortcut environmental review which will put decades of conservation gains at risk and harm these vital areas of public lands.

- a. *I am concerned about the impacts of more destructive livestock grazing in the few places on public lands that aren't already grazed. These areas are important to me because they are the best habitat for elk and other wildlife I care about.*

- b. *The BLM already has a hard time managing the current level of grazing and it is having major environmental impacts. Rather than expanding livestock to new areas, the agency should focus on improving current management and restoring more areas that have been damaged by grazing.*

Sample Messaging

Public Lands Belong to Everyone

The Bureau of Land Management is proposing sweeping changes to the rules governing livestock grazing across 155 million acres of public lands. These changes would make it harder for the public to participate in grazing decisions while giving livestock permittees greater influence over how public lands are managed.

Public lands belong to all Americans. Whether you care about wildlife, clean water, recreation, hunting, fishing, or healthy ecosystems, you deserve a voice in decisions that affect those lands. The proposed rule moves in the opposite direction by reducing public involvement and limiting accountability. The public has until July 13 to submit comments.

Restricting Public Lands to Commercial Livestock

The proposed rule would limit grazing permits to "production-oriented livestock" operations, a major shift in how public lands grazing is administered. According to the proposal, grazing permits should only be issued to livestock operations that produce commercial commodities such as beef or wool.

This change could make it impossible for conservation-focused grazing programs, including efforts to restore native bison to public landscapes, to obtain or retain grazing permits. Instead of recognizing multiple uses and diverse management goals, the rule prioritizes commercial livestock production above other public land values.

Public lands belong to all Americans. The government should not rewrite the rules to favor one use of public lands while excluding others. The public has until July 13 to submit comments.

Weakening Protections for Land Health

For decades, grazing regulations have included requirements intended to address damage to public lands when livestock grazing contributes to unhealthy conditions.

The proposed rule removes land health standards from the grazing regulations and shifts them into a separate section of BLM regulations. It also allows years to pass between the identification of grazing-related problems and corrective action.

At a time when public lands face increasing pressures from drought, climate change, invasive species, and habitat loss, weakening accountability for grazing impacts is the wrong direction. The public has until July 13 to tell the BLM that healthy public lands must remain a priority.

Less Transparency, Less Public Input

The proposed grazing rule would significantly reduce opportunities for public involvement in decisions affecting public lands.

The rule narrows who qualifies as an "interested public" participant, eliminates public involvement requirements for many grazing-related decisions, and shifts more responsibility onto citizens to discover what decisions are being made. It locks the public out of an important part of public land management.

Public lands management works best when decisions are transparent and the public has meaningful opportunities to participate. These proposed changes would make that more difficult. Comments are due by July 13.

Wildlife, Water, and Recreation Matter Too

Livestock grazing is the largest commercial use of public lands managed by the BLM, but it is not the only value these lands provide.

Millions of Americans depend on public lands for wildlife habitat, clean water, hunting, fishing, recreation, cultural resources, and outdoor experiences. The proposed grazing regulations place greater emphasis on accommodating private livestock production while reducing safeguards that help protect these other public values.

Public lands should be managed for multiple use, not primarily for the benefit of a single industry. The public has until July 13 to make their voices heard.

A Rule Written for Ranching Interests

The proposed rule repeatedly prioritizes livestock production and grazing convenience while reducing requirements for public oversight and environmental accountability on public lands.

Among other changes, the rule limits permits to "production-oriented" livestock operations, narrows public participation, reduces environmental safeguards for grazing administration, and

treats reductions in grazing as a problem to be solved rather than a management tool that helps heal the land when conditions deteriorate.

Public lands are owned by all Americans, not just those who hold grazing permits. The rules governing those lands should reflect that principle. Comments are due July 13.

Short Social Copy

1. Public lands belong to everyone. The BLM's proposed grazing rule would make it harder for the public to participate in decisions affecting 155 million acres of public land. Tell the agency your voice matters. Comments due July 13.
2. Under the BLM's proposed grazing rule, commercial livestock production gets accelerated while native bison restoration and other conservation-focused grazing projects could be pushed aside. Public lands belong to all Americans, not just one industry. Comments close July 13.
3. Wildlife, clean water, recreation, and healthy landscapes all depend on strong public lands protections. The BLM's proposed grazing rule would weaken public oversight and reduce accountability. Submit a comment by July 13.
4. The proposed grazing rule sabotages public participation while expanding livestock grazing. Public lands should be managed for all Americans, not just one industry. Comments due July 13.
5. The BLM is proposing major changes to grazing regulations that govern millions of acres of public lands across the West. Now is the time to speak up for wildlife, water, recreation, and public involvement. Comments close July 13.

Graphics

[Access the graphics folder here.](#)