



File Code: 1950-3/2200

Date: November 18, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is planning to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate whether livestock grazing will continue on fifteen sheep allotments on the Kemmerer Ranger District in southwest Wyoming, and if it is to continue, how grazing will be managed and what kind of adaptive management strategies would be implemented to maintain or achieve desired conditions and meet Forest Plan objectives. Desired conditions are defined by the Bridger-Teton Land and Resource Management Plan, Forest Service Manual, and applicable laws. This effort is undertaken to comply with the 1995 Rescissions Act (Public Law 104-19).

The project area encompasses 165,575 acres of National Forest System lands within Lincoln County in western Wyoming. Most of the project area's east boundary is west of Commissary Ridge; the west boundary is Salt Creek. The center of the project area lies roughly 17 air miles northeast of Cokeville, Wyoming and 37 air miles northwest of Kemmerer, Wyoming. The allotments included in the analysis are: Lower Salt Creek, Buckskin Knoll, Lake Alice, Smiths Fork, Aspen Springs, Basin Creek, Devil's Hole, Elk Creek, Green Knoll, Indian Creek, Lake Mountain, Pole Creek, Sams Allen Creek, South Fontenelle and Spruce Creek Allotments.

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to continue to authorize livestock grazing on the fifteen sheep allotments within the project area with updated livestock grazing and rangeland vegetation management direction. Resource desired conditions would be identified. Grazing practices would be guided by the amount and diversity of vegetation given the capability of soils, as well as indicators of soil quality such as amount of ground cover and sign of active erosion. Other Best Management Practices would be identified addressing the timing, duration, and in specific settings, the intensity of grazing. Adaptive management is part of the proposed action and would include criteria to guide management, pre-determined optional courses of action used to make adaptive changes in management over time, and monitoring which provides the basis for adjusting management to attain desired conditions. The proposed action may include specific rangeland vegetation improvements such as prescribed burning,



seeding, weed treatments and site specific erosion control treatments. Allotment Management Plans would become part of the term grazing permit and contain the livestock grazing and rangeland vegetation management direction identified by the Responsible Official's decision.

Possible Alternatives

To date the Bridger-Teton National Forest has identified two possible alternatives to the proposed action: A) No Domestic Livestock Grazing, and B) Continuation Of Current Livestock Management. Alternative A would eliminate livestock grazing on the project area within the next five years. This alternative will demonstrate the effects of eliminating livestock grazing on the environment and more clearly illustrate the potential effects of implementing any grazing and rangeland vegetation management alternative. Alternative B would continue current grazing management practices including annual adjustments in authorized livestock numbers and season.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Scoping on four of the allotments (Smiths Fork, Lake Alice, Buckskin Knoll and Lower Salt) was initiated in April 2008. I have decided to combine these four allotments with the eleven planned for this year due to the similarities between the allotments and the timing of the planned NEPA. Any comments received on previous scoping efforts on these allotments will be included and considered in this analysis.

DECISION TO BE MADE

The Kemmerer District Ranger will decide if livestock grazing will continue on fifteen allotments within the project area. If the decision is made to continue grazing, objectives specific to individual allotments will be developed to implement the management direction outlined in the analysis and/or the Forest Plan. Location and objectives for vegetation treatments will also be determined.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The Forest Service interdisciplinary team has identified the following preliminary issues. No determination has been made as to which will be examined in detail through the NEPA process. Your input will help determine which issues merit detailed analysis and also help identify additional issues related to the proposed action.

- 1) the amount and diversity of vegetation in some locations may be less than the current capability of soils.
- 2) sediment delivery to drainages supporting fisheries, and retention of precipitation on uplands, as evidenced by some headcutting/gullies and sign of active erosion.
- 3) wildlife values within some aspen stands are minimized by a lack of diverse aspen age classes; in some locations the diversity of herbaceous and shrub species in the understory is also diminished.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Scoping and public involvement is an essential part of the environmental planning process. Your input will help determine the issues that will shape the scope of the environmental review and be applied to develop reasonable alternatives for analysis. Comments should be submitted by **January 2, 2009** (45 days from publication in the Federal Register on November 17, 2008).

Send written comments to Tracy Hollingshead, District Ranger, Kemmerer Ranger District, 308 US Highway 189 North, Kemmerer, WY 83101. Electronic comments should be sent to: comments-intermtn-bridger-teton-kemmerer@fs.fed.us and on the subject line put "Kemmerer Grazing Allotments."

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 15 days.

The draft environmental impact statement is expected in May 2009 and the final environmental impact statement is expected in September 2009.

For further information contact Gary Dean, Rangeland Management Specialist, Kemmerer Ranger District, phone (307-877-4415), or email gdean@fs.fed.us .

Sincerely,

/s/ Tracy M. Hollingshead
TRACY M. HOLLINGSHEAD
Kemmerer District Ranger

Enclosure