

(1) Economic effects (positive or negative) to livestock grazing permittees and the local economy from changes in livestock management.

(2) Effects of proposed livestock grazing strategies on natural ecosystems. This includes elements such as native and desirable nonnative plant and animal communities, riparian areas, upland grasslands, wooded draws, ponderosa pine forested areas, areas of hazardous fuels, and threatened, endangered, sensitive, management indicator, and local concern species.

(3) Effects of proposed livestock grazing strategies on recreational activities and/or experiences.

Possible Alternatives

Potential alternatives will include a full range of management options including:

(1) No action = No grazing (this is required).

(2) No change from permit or current situation.

(3) Livestock grazing incorporating adaptive management to meet the Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines (Proposed Action). Adaptive management is defined as a process where land managers implement management practices that are designed to meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines, and would likely achieve the desired conditions in a timely manner. If monitoring shows that desired conditions, as described by Forest Plan Direction, are not being met, then an alternate set of management actions would be implemented to achieve the desired results.

Responsible Official

District Ranger, Pine Ridge Ranger District, Nebraska National Forest, 1240 W. 16th Street, Chadron, Nebraska 69337.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) does not document a decision. The purpose of this document is to disclose the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action and other alternatives that are analyzed. After providing the public an opportunity to comment on the specific activities described in the alternatives, the District Ranger will review the proposed action, the other alternatives, and the anticipated environmental consequences of each in order to make the following decisions:

1. Whether to continue to permit cattle grazing on all 34 allotments within the Pine Ridge Geographic Area.
2. If grazing is to be permitted, (a) What grazing systems and prescribed

livestock use would be permitted; (b) what structural range improvements would be undertaken; and (c) what type of monitoring program would be implemented. Individual Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) would then be developed to incorporate conditions outlined in the Record of Decision. These AMPs will be completed and approved prior to the 2004 grazing season, and would become part of the term grazing permits to be issued.

Scoping

A preliminary scoping letter was sent to interested parties on March 7, 2003. This letter asked for public comments on the proposal from March 7 to April 7, 2003. Public involvement will be especially important at several points during the analysis, beginning with the scoping process. The Forest Service will seek information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, local agencies, tribes, and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in, or affected by, the proposal. The scoping activities will include: (1) Engaging potentially affected or interested parties by written correspondence, (2) contacting those on our Forest media list, and (3) hosting public information meeting(s).

Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the formal scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement.

Early Notice of Importance for Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

A draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process.

First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental

impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the document. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21.)

Charles R. Marsh,

Acting District Ranger.

[FR Doc. 03-15422 Filed 6-18-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee will be meeting to discuss projects for 2003 and monitoring of 2002 projects. Agenda topics will include project proposal submissions and a public forum (question and answer session). The meeting is being held pursuant to the authorities in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463) and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of