



April 4, 2017

Elizabeth Humphrey, District Ranger
c/o Ciara Cusack
Sacramento Ranger District
PO Box 288
#4 Lost Ridge Rd.
Cloudcroft, NM 88317
Via email: comments-southwestern-lincoln-sacramento@fs.fed.us

Re: Scoping Comments on the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse Habitat Projects on the Sacramento Allotment, Lincoln National Forest

Dear Ranger Humphrey,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed habitat improvement projects on the Sacramento Allotment. While we appreciate the projects that are proposed, we believe they do not go far enough to adequately protect the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (NMMJM) and its critical habitat.

Approximately 100 acres of occupied NMMJM habitat are proposed for fenced exclosures. We would like to see a full analysis (with maps) in the NEPA analysis prepared for this project of all the NMMJM critical habitat within the Sacramento allotment, along with a full explanation of why not all of it is being protected with exclosures. These two quotes from the Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, dated October 20, 2016 ("Oct. 26, 2016 Bi-Op"), at 30, are instrumental to our concerns:

Areas designated as critical habitat for the jumping mouse in this unit incorporate the only habitat known to be occupied by the species since 2005 within the Sacramento Mountains with the capability to support the breeding and reproduction of the species.

Within the action area, there are 31 hectares (77 acres) of occupied designated critical habitat and 183 hectares (453 acres) of unoccupied designated critical habitat on the Forest Service excluding private land inholdings that is deemed suitable for jumping mouse and that contains the PCEs.

We also expect that any NMMJM habitat projects and ongoing livestock use on the Sacramento allotment will be in full compliance with the Oct. 26, 2016 Bi-Op, including utilization standards, compliance checks, monitoring and all limitations on stocking and movement. In addition, we expect any habitat projects planned and livestock use permitted on the allotment will fully comply with the Incidental Take Statement, Reasonable and Prudent Measures, Terms and Conditions, and Conservation Recommendations from the Oct. 26, 2016 Bi-Op.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service notes that the NMMJM needs patches of suitable habitat of at least 68 to 181 acres to support resilient and viable populations of NMMJM. Recovery Outline, New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, June 2014, at 4. How does this project address this habitat size need of the NMMJM?

We look forward to hearing more about this project as it proceeds. Please be sure to add my name to your contact list for the project.

Sincerely,



Greg Dyson
Wild Places Program Director
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