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Comments: The North Dakota Game and Fish Department received notice of the availability and request for comments on the Northern Great Plains Management Plans Revision Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Oil and Gas Leasing in late October. Because of concerns founded on the exceedingly short comment period, the Department reached out to Casey Johnson on November 1st. During the phone call we expressed our concern that the Forest Service would likely not receive meaningful comments from the Department, or other stakeholders for that matter, as 45 days was an insufficient amount of time to thoroughly review the almost 200 page document, understand its connection to the 2001 Grassland Plan and the 2003 Decision for Oil and Gas Leasing on the Little Missouri and Cedar River National Grasslands, and analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, at that time an extension was denied.

The Forest Service began development of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement in 2012. The process has been halted and restarted numerous times and, subsequently, has taken 6 years for the draft EIS to be ready for release. Although a 45 day comment period may be routine for other EIS input, it is far from adequate or reasonable in this case_ This document will guide oil and gas development on all remaining available land within the Little Missouri National Grasslands, over 200,000 acres, and warrants extensive review and input from all invested stakeholders. To appropriately review this document in its entirety and provide valuable comments, the Department would need to gather input from a number of biologist who focus on a range of topics from Sage Grouse to native prairie management. This requires a significant amount of staff time and coordination.

So that the Department can provide meaningful feedback based on the best science available, we again respectfully ask that the comment period be extended to 180 days, or a total of 6 months. This document will offer important guidance on oil and gas development for the foreseeable future, and as that development has the ability to greatly affect our state's trust resources, it is vital that the Department has a reasonable amount of time to provide feedback.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our request. We look forward to providing consequential feedback on the draft EIS should an extension be granted.