

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/7/2019 7:00:00 AM

First name: Larry

Last name: Ogden

Organization: JRB, LLC

Title:

Comments: Ashley Forest-PLAN REVISION-JRB-FINAL-.docx **TEXT FROM ATTACHMENT IS INCLUDED BELOW**

From: Larry Ogden <ogdenlf@aol.com>

Sent: Thursday, November 7, 2019 12:02 AM

To: FS-Comments Intermtn Ashley ForestPlanRevision; Neelan, Cathleen -FS

Cc: jrb_llc@hotmail.com; vance_broadbent@yahoo.com

Subject: JRB, LLC Comments to the Ashley National Forest Plan Revision

Attachments: Ashley Forest-PLAN REVISION-JRB-FINAL-.docx

Dear Mr. Richardson and Ms. Neelan,

Attached please find the comments of JRB, LLC to the Proposal to Revise the Land Management Plan for the Ashley National Forest.

Mr. Vance Broadbent, Manager of JRB, LLC is traveling and requested I forward this on his behalf.

You will find the email addresses of Mr. Broadbent and JRB, LLC in the Cc: section above.

Kindly reply by return email to me that you received this attachment.

Thank you,

Larry Ogden

JRB, LLC

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Salt Lake City, Utah 84158

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November 06, 2019

Michael Richardson Acting Forest Supervisor ATTN: Cathleen Neelan, Forest Plan Revision Team Lead Ashley National Forest

U.S. Forest Service 355 North Vernal Avenue Vernal, Utah 84078 (sent via email: AshleyForestPlan@usda.gov, Cathleen.neelan@usda.gov)

Subject: Proposal to Revise the Land Management Plan for the Ashley National Forest

Dear Mr. Richardson and Ms. Neelan:

As a Permittee on the Ashley National Forest, we appreciate this opportunity to comment on the above mentioned Proposal to Revise the Land Management Plan for the Ashley National Forest ("Plan Revision").

Some of our comments will be general in nature, and some will be more specific.

Guidelines 09 and 10 listed on page 35 of the Plan Revision are problematic to us for several reasons. We feel each of these Guidelines should be REMOVED and REPLACED with

"Manage in accordance with the provisions, recommendations, and management strategies of the Utah Bighorn Sheep Statewide Management Plan".

It should be noted that domestic sheep have grazed in the Ashley National Forest for over a century; while bighorn sheep were re-introduced into this area merely a few decades ago. The original intent of bighorn sheep translocation in the mid 1980's was not to remove domestic sheep from grazing allotments in the Ashley National Forest. Further, on page two of the Utah Bighorn Sheep Statewide Management Plan it states that the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources "does not support any form of involuntary restriction, reduction, limitation, termination, or conversion of permitted domestic sheep grazing for purposes of protecting bighorn sheep on public or private property." As previously mentioned, the bighorn sheep on the Ashley National Forest are translocated herds; and currently are well outside of their originally intended location(s). This bighorn sheep situation should not dictate the future of domestic sheep and/or goats grazing the forest, or prohibit future domestic sheep producers from grazing on the Ashley National Forest.

In July of this year we submitted comments regarding a Draft Environmental Impact Statement concerning the High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep Analysis Project ("DEIS"). This DEIS included the Ashley National Forest. The Forest Service pointed out in said DEIS that removal of domestic sheep grazing would not solve or remove the risk of contact to bighorn sheep, due to the unique interspersed land pattern of federal (Forest Service or BLM), State and private lands. With the foraging proclivities and habits of bighorn sheep, they would still have a high risk of contact with domestic sheep on BLM and private lands. Consequently there would still be a high risk for pathogen transfer to occur. Since the staff of the Ashley National Forest worked on the above DEIS, the current Guidelines 09 and 10 at page 35 of the Plan Revision seem extremely inadequate, inconsistent with, and lacking any connection to or thought regarding their recent prior work on said DEIS. The Plan Revision should somehow reflect the successful measures taken by the agencies of the State of Utah to manage a sustainable bighorn sheep population for decades while in proximity to domestic sheep; measures that have been and are being taken to reduce the risk for pathogen transfer to occur; and the substantial progress that has been made by the cooperative efforts of the permittees with the Forest Service, and also with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Additionally, the science regarding the risk of pathogen transfer is currently evolving. There are studies and research indicating there are several species, other than domestic sheep, including various wildlife, that can transmit or transfer the pathogen to bighorn sheep. We encourage the Forest Service to monitor, take a hard look, and give serious consideration to these recent and continuing studies and research for appropriate inclusion in the Plan Revision.

In May of 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding was executed between the USDA, Forest Service Intermountain Region, the State of Utah, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food ("MOU"), to document the cooperative efforts of the parties to manage bighorn sheep herds and their habitats on National Forest System ("NFS") lands in the State of Utah. The Utah Bighorn Sheep Statewide Management Plan was attached to and incorporated into the MOU as Appendix A. Guidelines 09 and 10 at page 35 of the Plan Revision, as written, seem to be oblivious to the existence of the MOU, let alone the purposes of the MOU and the Utah Bighorn Sheep Statewide Management Plan attached thereto as Appendix A. We cannot understand this. This seems to be a critical error and an unnecessary one since the staff of the Ashley National Forest, earlier this year, substantially participated in the DEIS mentioned above, and had personnel involved in some aspects of the MOU.

It is appropriate to express our substantial frustration at this point. Our organization spent considerable effort and time (that we did not have) participating in the review of and commenting on the DEIS (which included the Ashley National Forest). We had numerous conversations and meetings with management of the Ashley National Forest and the regional office, and also had further conversations with various Utah State agencies and the Forest Service regarding the MOU. The substantial portion of such time and effort regarded domestic sheep grazing and related issues regarding bighorn sheep. Virtually everything we have written and commented on thus far in this letter is a rehash of the same issues we discussed with management of the Ashley National Forest and the regional office earlier this year. Much was accomplished in the earlier efforts and discussions regarding the cooperative effort to manage bighorn sheep herds and their habitats on NFS lands in the State of Utah. Unfortunately none of said accomplishments were included or reflected in Guidelines 09 and 10 at page 35 of the Plan Revision, or that we could find elsewhere in the Plan Revision. Please explain in detail why this glaring

omission? We presume that you understand that we, and other ranchers, rarely have the luxury to work on these matters during normal "office hours". As you know our typical day starts substantially before sunrise and ends shortly before bedtime. Unless we are lucky to get free time during the day, our review of and comments regarding Plan Revisions and Environmental Impact Statements generally has to occur during sleeping hours between 22:00 to 4:00. Thus to duplicate the same complex matters with personnel of the same office within the same year is extremely frustrating.

Guidelines 09 and 10 at page 35 of the Plan Revision are contrary to and do not comply with the Utah Bighorn Sheep Statewide Management Plan.

Guidelines 01 and 02 on page 45 regarding Livestock Grazing are also problematic to us and should be REMOVED and REPLACED. We are not sure of the replacement language, however will express our concerns. Guidelines 01 and 02 are overly specific for a Land Management Plan. During the lengthy term or period of the Land Management Plan, such specificity would be disadvantageous for required decisions dealing with the myriad of changes in a host of areas that likely will occur. Additionally, our review of the Plan Revision did not find similar specifics applied to other uses or resources. Utilization standards and stubble height requirements do not seem to be appropriate in or beneficial to a Land Management Plan. Utilization standards and stubble height requirements are more appropriately discussed or reviewed during shorter planning cycles such as permit renewals and annual operational reviews. Possible replacement language for consideration is: The utilization of key forage species should be determined by the then current condition of the allotment, the then grazing management of the allotment, and relevant monitoring data, in order to meet desired conditions and sustain livestock grazing.

We have one additional comment concerning Livestock Grazing at page 45 of the Plan Revision. Given the collaborative nature of the two Goals listed therein, and our discussion on page 2 of this letter regarding the referenced DEIS and the MOU, we strongly request prior to the introduction or augmentation of any bighorn sheep, a project level MOU be developed between local, state, and federal agencies, and grazing permittees.

The many rural communities around the Ashley National Forest were primarily developed through the agricultural, timbering and mining/extraction industries. Livestock grazing is integral to the employment opportunities, traditional lifestyle, social fabric and culture values of these communities. Livestock producers contribute to the long term socio economic diversity and stability of their local communities. Since a substantial percentage (approximately 50%) of the land in Utah is managed by federal agencies, livestock producers, including ourselves, are forced to rely heavily on public lands grazing permits. Without such permits, it would be extremely difficult for most ranchers, ourselves included, to remain in business. We probably would be forced to sell our ranches and the land that we have for generations worked, scratched and toiled to acquire, develop and manage.

Our family has generational ties to the land. On our ranching operation, we now have the 5th generation of our family working on the ranch. We love ranch life. It's a hard life, but enjoyable and rewarding to our family. One of the many important responsibilities of the Forest service is to oversee/manage habitat health. As a ranch operation we live and die by healthy habitat, adequate water, whatever the weather throws at us, and market conditions over which we have no control. We try to be good stewards and carefully manage our grazing on federal, state and private lands. There is no benefit, profit or gain by abusing a grazing resource, thereby impairing the habitat. It would be the same as shooting ourselves in the foot or kneecap.

Finally, the loss of domestic grazing on public lands would be devastating to us as a permittee. Our ability to

survive would be extremely questionable. This would certainly be a negative socio-economic impact to our local communities, to our families, to our operation as the permittee, and it would cause further harm to an already suffering sheep industry. The loss of domestic grazing would also have a negative impact on the Ashley National Forest. Among other things, livestock grazing is an extremely cost effective form of vegetative management (including invasive plant control). It also provides soil aeration, and seed to soil contact through hoof action. It often provides increased water developments, which access also benefits wildlife. The cessation of grazing would increase fuel loads, which could create a risk of catastrophic wildfires.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment, and look forward to continue working with the Forest Service to ensure that responsible domestic livestock grazing continues on public lands.

Sincerely,

JRB, LLC

By: Vance S. Broadbent, Manager

Cc: Ray S. Broadbent

L. F. Ogden

D. L. Darley