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Comments: Please find attached NMF&LB comments.

Thank you.

New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau (NMFLB) submits these comments on behalf of our 19,000-member families. NMFLB is New Mexico's largest agriculture organization, representing members involved in all aspects of agriculture from dairy, livestock, fruits and vegetables. Our mission is to promote and protect agriculture in the great State of New Mexico. We are charged with the important task of representing our members' interests when it comes to impeding regulations. NMFLB encourages the Lincoln National Forest to work and collaborate with local non-government entities, producers, community members, and others impacted during the revision process. NMFLB is comprised of members that hold traditions of farming, ranching, and utilizing working lands. Many of our members are allotment owners and graze cattle on the Lincoln National Forest; grazing plays an important role in managing and maintaining healthy forests and is an effective tool in fire management. NMF&LB appreciates the acknowledgment in which the Lincoln National Forest draft plan recognizes the importance that grazing and harvesting wood plays in local economies. "For over a century, communities surrounding the Lincoln National Forest have relied on it as a source of sustenance and income. There is a need for plan components that recognize the Lincoln National Forest's role in contributing to local economies (timber, grazing, and other multiple-use activities and products, etc.)." Social and Economic Conditions, and Multiple Uses, Draft Forest Plan, pg. 11). As mentioned previously, many of our members as well as members of the surrounding communities utilize working lands and the resources available in them. As you continue to develop the draft forest plan, we respectfully request that you include provisions which allow for responsible wood harvesting not only as a method to assist in forest management and fuel load reduction, but also to assist local communities in heating their homes during winter. Wilderness can limit access to cattle and range improvements on allotments which limit grazing activity. This can lead to overgrowth in the forest and can have a large economic impact on local communities. In addition, wilderness study areas, which are often treated and managed as wilderness are seldom released from this classification status even though they may not meet the criteria. NMF&LB supports grazing activities on the Lincoln National Forest. Additional wilderness and wilderness study areas can limit access to cattle and range improvements on allotments. Alternatives NMF&LB supports an alternative that does not increase wilderness or wilderness study areas, encourages, and relies on grazing as a tool for healthy forests and forest management. We commend the Lincoln National Forest Service for including additional watering sources for livestock grazing in Alternative E, however, these measures should occur on a regular basis to aid in additional water for livestock and wildlife while supporting relationships with allotment owners. Public meetings held throughout this process involve the general public, however, allotment owners have a vested interest in the forest and hold a binding contract for their allotments. They should be notified and allowed to participate at a higher stakeholder level. As changes to allotments and accessibility highly affect allotment owners, NMF&LB strongly encourages the Forest Service to make every attempt to work with allotment owners. We encourage continued and extensive communication between allotment owners and the Lincoln National Forest during the Forest Revision Process. NMF&LB respectfully requests that you consider traditional uses such as grazing and wood harvesting and the important role they play in our forests and in New Mexico cultures. We support an alternative that encourages grazing and uses it as a tool for fire prevention. Lastly, we do not support an alternative that increases wilderness and wilderness study areas. We look forward to our continued participation in the forest revision process and appreciate the opportunity to submit comments. We respectfully request they be taken into consideration. Respectfully, Tiffany Rivera
Director of Government Relations