Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/4/2023 7:00:00 AM
First name: Redge B.
Last name: Johnson
Organization: Division of Natural Resources
Title:
Comments:

Department of Natural Resources
Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office

REDGE B. JOHNSON
State of Utah Executive Director

SPENCER J. COX
Governor

DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
Lieutenant Governor

January 4, 2023

Submitted via electronically: comments-intermtn-dixie-powell@usda.gov

Christopher Wehrli
District Ranger
Powell Ranger District
Dixie National Forest
225 E. Center Street
Panguitch, UT 84759

Subject: Showalter Range Water Improvement
RDCC Project No. 85163

Dear Mr. Wehrli:

The state of Utah (State) through the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO) has reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) and supports Showalter Range Water Improvement project. The State, in collaboration with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF), submits the following comments for your consideration.

The proposed water well and water conveyance system will provide substantial benefits for the rangeland for years to come. Water development projects are especially important with the extreme drought that Utah is facing. The proposed project will take place within the Pines and East Pines Cattle and Horse (C&H) Allotments. These allotments support an estimated more than 1,064 head months and contribute substantially to the local economies each year. If the proposed project requires adjustments to grazing schedules, The State requests that these adjustments are coordinated with the applicable livestock grazing

permittees.

Increased watering sources have clear and substantial benefits for wildlife, vegetative health, and livestock grazing. The majority of wildlife species benefit from increased watering sources, including both game and non-game species. Overall, increased watering sources provide enormous benefits for rangeland ecosystems, wildlife, and domestic

livestock grazing on public lands. The proposed range improvements will contribute to the maximum sustainable use of the land and improve grazing distribution throughout the allotment. Increased and improved watering sources distribute livestock more evenly across grazing pastures due to livestock tendencies to congregate close to water. Providing additional infrastructure reduces overgrazing in and around water sources and riparian habitat. Distribution of grazing from in and around riparian habitats also helps improve water quality through the filtering that is performed by healthy riparian vegetation. Evenly distributed livestock also graze pastures less intensely and allow native grasses and brush an easier recovery. These benefits extend beyond livestock to improve wildlife access to fresh water.

Additionally, the proposed project will be consistent with the State of Utah Resource Management Plan which states, "The state supports prompt approval by land management agencies of all range improvements, increased water infrastructure, and vegetation treatments [1] to benefit domestic livestock, wildlife, and consequently the health of federal lands." UDAF looks forward to continually working with the Forest Service to achieve healthy rangelands in the state of Utah through livestock grazing.

The State appreciates the opportunity to review the EA and submit comments. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Redge B. Johnson
Executive Director

[1] Utah State Resource Management Plan. 2022. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dfcb1273409645c6a617a78cc4184657