

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/28/2023 11:05:08 PM

First name: Gregg

Last name: Sutherland

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed shooting ban in Pike National Forest.

I propose developing shooting ranges to draw target shooters to those ranges, but USFS should continue to allow today's legal target shooting, when it does not violate any existing safety laws or location restrictions. A shooting ban is unjustified and unfair to the vast majority of safe and law-abiding target shooters.

The obvious option that most effectively mitigates risks while not unduly restricting legal shooting in the NF is to build the shooting ranges, but do not enact a new shooting ban. Sadly, this option has not been considered by USFS.

Building the shooting ranges will probably reduce some dispersed shooting. They would like especially attract shooters from the informal shooting ranges, since those shooters are comfortable with locations with concentrated shooters already. Building these shooting ranges also fulfills the NF charter for multi-use. Further, these ranges could be operated under license, as one such Pike NF range is doing successfully already. This approach, already working at one site, could minimize USFS costs.

Enacting a new shooting ban across most of the NF is a bridge too far. There is insufficient specific evidence to support a need for such a drastic action that would ban a legal NF activity. Enacting such a ban would increase USFS enforcement personnel and costs, and confound visitors trying to navigate their way to a legal dispersed target shooting area. This would wrongfully ban a legal activity that most target-shooting visitors enjoy safely and responsibly, with only an average of 2 relevant "Violations" per month occurring today across 1.1 million acres of NF. To reduce "offenses" even further, USFS could invest in more enforcement and education among NF visitors who want to target shoot.

Do not enact this shooting ban, which has a flimsy basis for its justification, will cost money that USFS does not have, and will prevent NF visitors from enjoying legal shooting safely and responsibly.