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Organization: Sheyenne Valley Grazing Association

Title: President

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,The Sheyenne Valley Grazing Association was incorporated in 1941, a nonprofit organization of local landowners who desired to graze cattle on the surrounding Government land. The Grazing Association has actively cooperated with the Federal Government in changing the land use practices and aiding the rebuilding of our rural economy after the Soil Conservation Service was charged with the task of reestablishing vegetative cover on the land.With more than 80 years of experience restoring and conserving grassland forage we would like to express our concern with the proposed changes to the Forest Service manual and handbook.1. 2200 Zero Code is filled with the history of the Forest Service and laws that are no longer in place or pertinent (such as 1906 Forest Reserve Agriculture Entry Acts, Transfer Act of 1905, Granger-Thye Act of 1950 etc.) This does not pertain to policy and procedure. All the laws should be reviewed for accuracy.2. There is a large disconnect between chapters. How does an agency, group, or individual keep track of what laws pertain to what lands when information appears to be scattered throughout the whole document?3. The FS Handbook could have a chapter specifically for Grazing Associations on National Grasslands to help alleviate confusion to what pertains to National Forest Land and what pertains to the Grazing Associations on National Grasslands.4. Section 12.22-Livestock Ownership Requirements. We would like to see the option be extended to nieces/nephews to accommodate those who do not have children/grandchildren but still want to keep the operation in the family.5. More clearly define Grazing Agreement, Grazing Permit, and Term Grazing Permit. Forest Service does not acknowledge that Grazing agreements are not term grazing permits, even though they say "The association itself is eligible to hold their term grazing permit (the agreement)}}, but most associations do not own qualifying land or livestock" as follows:Thus the association itself is eligible to hold their term grazing permit (the agreement), but most associations do not own qualifying land or livestock. Instead, the association distributes grazing privileges and issues association term grazing permits to their members, and all of their member must own qualifying base property and permitted livestock just as Forest Service direct Issued term grazing permittees must own both.6. In 2020 the Dakota Prairie Grasslands and the Forest Service negotiated our Standard Grazing Agreement. The Sheyenne Valley Grazing Association signed this agreement February 12, 2020. Part of this negotiation was the "Standard Language" section of the FSH 2209.13-Grazing Permit Administration Handbook Chapter 20-Grazing Agreements; 23.1. All nine clauses were negotiated in the DPG Standard Grazing Agreement. All of these clauses are put back in the handbook as previously stated, and it does not clarify whether or not they still pertain to the DPG or if the Forest Service would recognize that the Standard Grazing agreement is sufficient. We were under the impression these would remain in effect after the 10 years and feel this is a reversal on our good faith agreement.7. We feel section 12.21-Base Property Ownership Requirements need to have a specific section pertaining to National Grasslands as each grazing association has their own Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, Grazing Agreement and Rules of Management. It is further understood as stated in 425, Pub.L.110-161, "In fiscal year 2008 and thereafter, the Forest Service shall not change the eligibility requirements for base property, and livestock ownership as they relate to leasing of base property and shared livestock agreements for grazing permits on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands that were in effect as of July 18, 2005". We feel this should be cited in the FS Handbook as long-term leasing on the National Grasslands is a way to keep ranchers on the lands.8. Successional, and successional base property should be removed from the FS handbook as it has never been defined in regulation or policy.In conclusion we hope the Forest Service will review their manual and handbook with these changes in mind. The Sheyenne Valley Grazing Association remains willing to discuss aspects of the program that merit revision. We hope to maintain a good working relationship between the Forest Service and our association.The Sheyenne Valley Grazing Association has also signed comments submitted by the North Dakota Grazing Associations and would like to reiterate our support of those comments as well.Sincerely,Gary Anderson, PresidentJeff Bunn, Vice PresidentSheyenne Valley Grazing Association