

**From:** McDonald, Peter M -FS  
**Sent:** 25 Jul 2017 01:48:21 +0000  
**To:** Kozlowski, Steve -FS  
**Cc:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** Re: Plague Event on Thunder Basin National Grassland

Steve thanks for the update. I hope the monitoring will continue and some flexibility to adapt decisions to the situation that will be continually changing. I'll continue to monitor from here too.  
Peter

Sent from my phone

On Jul 24, 2017 9:08:20 AM, "Kozlowski, Steve -FS" <skozlowski@fs.fed.us> wrote:  
Hi Peter,  
Shane Walker, District Ranger, prepared the quick briefing in messages below and I wasn't sure if you received it through other channels. Very useful.

Also, I queried Dennis regarding dusting and shooting ban topics, very brief hallway conversation, and here is what I heard.

**Dusting** - will be discussed in more detail Tuesday at FLT meeting with Dennis, Jason Kuikan (Acting F.Sup.), and Shane Walker. Discuss doing it in cooperation/coordination with WGF, TBGPEA, and others.

**Shooting Ban** – No plan to reinstate at this time, the lift remains in effect until March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Larger goal here is to get on board between WGF and FS, work more together on these things so nobody hanging out by themselves.

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**Steve Kozlowski, USFS**

Sage-grouse Coordinator – MBRTB

Wildlife Biologist - TEAMS

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**From:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS  
**Sent:** Monday, July 24, 2017 7:27 AM  
**To:** Voos, Aaron T -FS <atvoos@fs.fed.us>; Reynolds, Kelle A -FS <kareynolds@fs.fed.us>; Kozlowski, Steve -FS <skozlowski@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** FW: Epizootic Plague Event on Thunder Basin National Grassland

FYI



**Dennis L. Jaeger**  
**Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
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**From:** Walker, Michael S -FS  
**Sent:** Friday, July 21, 2017 4:20 PM  
**To:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS <[djaeger01@fs.fed.us](mailto:djaeger01@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** Epizootic Plague Event on Thunder Basin National Grassland

#### **Background**

- Sylvatic plague has been present on the Thunder Basin National Grassland for at least 15-years.
- Small outbreaks of plague is a regular occurrence.
- The last epizootic event on the grassland occurred 2007-09, reducing the occupied acreage from approximately 16,000-acres to approximately 3,000-acres.
- The associated sensitive species (Mountain plover, Burrowing owl, and Swift fox) populations were significantly reduced for several years following the last epizootic event.
- A minimum of 43,000-acres of occupied prairie dog colony habitat on the TBNG in 2016.
- Acreage exceeded scientific understanding and TBNG plan expectations of growth and behavior.
- USGS study of plague resistance fleas on TBNG in 2015 and 2016 determined that the fleas are not yet resistant to Delta-dust.
- Planned to poison approximately 10,000-acres of occupied prairie dog colonies on NFS in collaboration and cooperation with partners, cooperators, and neighbors.

#### **Current Situation**

- Signs appear to indicate that the epizootic event started in fall 2017 in Weston county and moved west.
- A second outbreak started in Converse county – possibly in winter 2016/17 – and moved east.
- Approximately 6,000 – 8,000 acres of prairie dog colonies have died as to date.
- Anticipate approximately 75% of the prairie dog colony acres to die of plague by fall.

- Anticipate approximately 90% of the prairie dog colony acres to die of plague by spring 2018.
- No guarantee that plague will not kill 100% of the prairie dog colonies in conjunction with recreational shooting and poisoning.
- Collaborating and cooperating with partners, cooperators, and neighbors to monitor the progress of plague across northeastern Wyoming.
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department confirmed two prairie dogs from northeastern Wyoming died of sylvatic plague.

#### **Actions**

- Monitoring the progress of plague in coordination and cooperation with our partners on National Forest System, state, and private lands.
- Executing poisoning priorities from the grazing associations this fall.
- Executing broad prairie dog control agreements with Converse, Campbell, and Weston counties.
- Agreements with counties will cover lethal and non-lethal control methods, and dusting for fleas.
- Explaining to the grazing associations and county weed and pest departments the rationale for dusting prairie dogs before poisoning.
- Planning to dust prairie dogs to kill fleas prior to poisoning on National Forest System lands.
- Developing a public service announcement in cooperation with the BLM, WGFD, Converse County, Campbell County, Weston County, Niobrara County, and the chamber of commerce's for communities in northeastern Wyoming in preparation to a large influx of visitors during the solar eclipse.

#### **Recommendations**

- Apply shooting restrictions in select areas of the MA 3.63.
- Coordinate with partners and cooperators in applying Delta-dust in up to 3 colonies with high value and occupied habitat for multiple sensitive species in MA 3.63.
  - 12-people in 5-days can cover 1,000-acres.
- Dusting in the 3 priority colonies would occur for the next 3-6 years to ensure plague does not enter the colonies.
-

**From:** Bacon, Russell M -FS  
**Sent:** 24 May 2018 22:13:58 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** RE: PLEASE DRAFT A RESPONSE: #8448602 Prairie Dogs on the Thunder Basin National Grassland -- Secretary's signature  
**Attachments:** Draft Sec response Thunder Basin Grazing Assoc.docx

OK, let's go with this draft.



**Russ Bacon**  
**Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow - Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grasslands**

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Thank you for your follow-up letter regarding our conversation in Wyoming about your concerns regarding management of the Black Tailed Prairie Dog on the Thunder Basin National Grasslands.

I am aware that Grasslands Supervisor Russ Bacon has declared his intention to undertake a grasslands plan amendment. He has been working closely with the Governor Matt Mead's Office and the Wyoming Department of Agriculture to develop a collaborative process that will hopefully result in a streamlined proposed action for the plan amendment late this calendar year. The official plan amendment process would begin soon afterwards. I recognize your concern with the time it takes to complete a plan amendment. The USDA Forest Service is committed to moving through that process as efficiently and effectively as possible in accordance with policy.

In February of 2018 Supervisor Bacon co-signed a letter with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the US Fish and Wildlife Service which explained their rationale for not re-introducing black footed ferrets on the Thunder Basin National Grassland at this time.

Supervisor Bacon recognizes the opportunity that the population downturn has presented and is prioritizing implementation of restoration projects on lands affected by prairie dog expansion. He will continue his coordination with Grazing Associations, County Commissioners, Weed and Pest, Thunder Basin Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), and other stakeholders to ramp up restoration projects.

Of my seven strategic goals for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, I find your comments align with many, especially the goal to facilitate rural prosperity and economic development as well as the goal to foster productive and sustainable use of our National Forest System Lands.

I thank you for being a steward of our nation's valuable asset, our national grasslands....

**From:** Ferebee, Brian -FS  
**Sent:** 25 Oct 2017 12:26:58 +0000  
**To:** Chamois L. Andersen  
**Cc:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS; Walker, Michael S -FS; Lindsey Sterling Krank (b) (6); Bly, Kristy (b) (6); Jonathan Proctor  
**Subject:** RE: steps toward solutions - Thunder Basin National Grassland

Chamois, thanks for the update and I appreciate your perspective with respect to the consideration of a possible amendment. BF



**Brian Ferebee**  
**Regional Forester**  
**Forest Service**  
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**From:** Chamois L. Andersen (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:58 AM  
**To:** Ferebee, Brian -FS <[bferebee@fs.fed.us](mailto:bferebee@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS <[jabuchanan@fs.fed.us](mailto:jabuchanan@fs.fed.us)>; Lohr, Steve -FS <[slohr@fs.fed.us](mailto:slohr@fs.fed.us)>; Walker, Michael S -FS <[mswalker@fs.fed.us](mailto:mswalker@fs.fed.us)>; Lindsey Sterling Krank (b) (6); (b) (6); Bly, Kristy (b) (6); (b) (6); Jonathan Proctor (b) (6)  
**Subject:** steps toward solutions - Thunder Basin National Grassland

Dear Mr. Ferebee,

We wanted to let you know that the last Ruckelshaus Institute stakeholder working groups and recent discussions have really been collaborative toward finding solutions to prairie dog management on the Thunder Basin National Grassland.

We had an informal meeting last week in Laramie in which we brainstormed with Dave Pellatz (Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association) and Cheryl Schwartzkoph (Converse County Weed and Pest) on ideas for balancing the needs of the permittees with those of the conservation partners. We have some new ideas that we will share with the working groups at

the December meeting. We have also charted the plan for the FS to consider for the habitat restoration projects, along with scheduling and purchasing the materials and timelines.

I just wanted to drop you a quick note that we are feeling much better about our collaborative efforts, and are really pleased with the latest efforts by the Forest Service as a partner and with its role with the working groups. With all of this in mind, we ask once again that you please not open the forest plan to an amendment and instead allow these discussions to proceed toward possible solutions. We believe that solutions that may be developed through collaboration and discussions between diverse stakeholders would be more accepted by all and lead to less conflict than a divisive plan amendment process at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this update.

Best Regards,  
Chamois



**Chamois L. Andersen**  
Senior Representative, Rockies & Plains

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**From:** McDonald, Peter M -FS  
**Sent:** 19 Dec 2017 15:55:45 +0000  
**To:** Kozlowski, Steve -FS; Reynolds, Kelle A -FS  
**Cc:** Byer, Tim -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS; Bierman, Sylvia (Clark)- FS  
**Subject:** RE: Thunder Basin, please use this version

Most of these are very one-sided against prairie dogs and we'll need to weigh each carefully against our policies and objectives for prairie dogs on the national grasslands.

Peter



**Peter McDonald**  
**Regional Program Group Leader**  
**Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species**

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**From:** Kozlowski, Steve -FS  
**Sent:** Monday, December 18, 2017 9:53 AM  
**To:** Reynolds, Kelle A -FS <kareynolds@fs.fed.us>  
**Cc:** Byer, Tim -FS <tbyer@fs.fed.us>; McDonald, Peter M -FS <petermcdonald@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** FW: Thunder Basin, please use this version

FYI,

Attached is the 2017 summary report prepared by Ruckelshaus Institute regarding collaborative meetings related to prairie dogs. Of particular interest are the **12 recommendations** to all agencies from the Cooperative Working group (a group of governmental entities who have federal, state or county authority in relation to prairie dog management and range restoration in the Thunder Basin). Below is a summary of the recommendations, the details start on page 22 of the attachment.

1. Consider Revising the Current Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy
2. Determine whether the current category designations are appropriate.
3. Use innovative approaches to restoration and vegetation management, including:
  - Continued prairie dog control;
  - Invasive species control, including for cheatgrass;
  - Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones);
  - Reduce erosion through prairie dog management;
  - Remove cactus, three-awn, cheatgrass, and mound;
  - Reseeding.

- Monitor and inventory range conditions, ground cover
- 4. Maintain healthy sagebrush, riparian, and mesic communities. Do not allow prairie dogs to transition into these communities.
- 5. Improve and develop consistent communication and information distribution between meetings.
- 6. Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs. Include TBGPEA, private landowner, University of Wyoming, USFS, and other relevant data sources.
- 7. Consider options for long-term and consistent project funding such as: creating a full-time position for a "Prairie Dog Manager"
- 8. The USFS will follow through on management commitments and regulatory obligations and will collaborate on an improved Strategy that includes definitive triggers and associated actions.
- 9. Recognize in a revised strategy the conflicting classifications of prairie dogs. Acknowledge that prairie dogs are considered a pest by some people.
- 10. Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague.
- 11. Greater emphasis on Prairie Dog Boundary Management
- 12. As long as black-footed ferrets are not being reintroduced on the TBNG, drop the shooting ban in Category 3.63.

Next learning series and cooperative meetings are scheduled in February.

Steve

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**Steve Kozlowski, USFS**

Wildlife, Botany, and Fish Resource Team Leader for the MBRTB

Forest Wildlife Biologist

Sage-grouse Coordinator

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**From:** Voos, Aaron T -FS**Sent:** Friday, December 15, 2017 10:21 AM**To:** Reynolds, Kelle A -FS <[kareynolds@fs.fed.us](mailto:kareynolds@fs.fed.us)>; Alpe, Mike J -FS <[malpe@fs.fed.us](mailto:malpe@fs.fed.us)>; Kozlowski, Steve -FS <[skozlowski@fs.fed.us](mailto:skozlowski@fs.fed.us)>**Subject:** FW: Thunder Basin, please use this version

FYI...this is the report from the Ruckelshaus Institute as a result of 2017 collaborative meetings, both public and government.



**Aaron Voos**  
**Public Affairs Specialist**

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**From:** (b) (6) **On Behalf Of** Jessica Western  
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**Subject:** Thunder Basin, please use this version

Good morning,

After I sent you the report yesterday, I of course found some more notes buried in my car, which I have added. They include the next steps you want to take. This version will be posted online, and has also been sent to the USFS.

Best,

Jessica

--

Jessica M. Western, Ph.D. (formerly Clement)  
Senior Research Scientist, Human Dimensions in Natural Resources  
Director, Collaboration Program in Natural Resources  
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**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** 16 Aug 2017 19:46:35 +0000  
**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS;Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** RE: Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-16-short form-draft-prairie-dog-letter\_jjk.docx, State of Wyoming Select Federal NR Committee MBR testimony\_08\_16\_2017\_Lohr and Henning edits\_jjk\_2.docx

Carolyn and Steve,

Delete the previous message.

As things tend to happen this way, 12 minutes after I sent this, Sharon provided Sandy with the correct numbers. Please see this version instead for the revised testimony – the attached Weston County letter is unchanged.

Sorry for the confusion,

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National Grassland**

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**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 16, 2017 1:30 PM  
**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <cupton@fs.fed.us>; Lohr, Steve -FS <slahr@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony

Carolyn and Steve,

Thank you for the time yesterday, good conversation, truly appreciated.

Please find attached the revised Weston County letter as discussed.

Also, please find attached the revised testimony based on comments received. Apparently the Wyoming timber outputs were provided by RO staff and used in other testimony recently – we are

happy to use corrected numbers. Trying to learn the R2 process, do I need to send this testimony to anyone else for review/concurrence?

Thanks again and please don't hesitate to steer me in the right direction.

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**



Dear Mr. Darnell and Mr. Redding,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding prairie dogs colonies on Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) and adjacent State and Private Lands. Since 1960, we have been working closely with our local partners including Weston County to manage the Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) in a manner that is favorable for multiple lands uses and helps sustain local economic activities. Now more than ever, the need to strengthen these partnerships is evident.

We acknowledge the concerns you identified regarding the recent increase in prairie dog colony expansions, how they affect rangelands and pose a threat to human health and safety. You also requested the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides (such as Rozol) and fumigants, in addition to the existing use of zinc phosphide oats, because they are more effective in removing colonies that cause a human health and safety risk around residences.

We acknowledge that prairie dog colonies have been exceeding our objectives in Category 1, 2, and 3 lands, with at least 43,000 acres on TBNG in 2016. To address this situation, in March of 2017 we temporarily rescinded the ban on shooting prairie dogs in the 3.63 management area. We also worked with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations to identify and prioritize treatment areas for the potential application of zinc phosphide bait. Participating agreements to conduct control activities have been established and are being funded with over \$100,000 distributed to County Weed and Pest Districts to implement the activities.

I am requesting that proposed lethal control activities be discussed through a proposed new local collaborative sub-group made up of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), a representative of the Wyoming Weed and Pest districts, and me as the local line officer for the U.S. Forest Service. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with the Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands).

Regarding your request for the use of other forms of lethal control, the only rodenticide currently approved for use on prairie dog colonies on the TBNG is zinc phosphide. We will continue to coordinate with our Regional Office regarding the results of the 2015 Risk Assessment that was conducted for the use of Chlorophacinone (Rozol) on Forest Service lands, and the NEPA documentation and coordination with our state partners that would be needed prior to authorizing the use of additional rodenticides on the TBNG.

Considering the concerns that you have brought to our attention, our responsibility for human health and safety, and our 2015 Management Strategy to sustain prairie dog colonies, I am planning to introduce the following items for discussion and consideration at the next scheduled Thunder Basin Collaborative meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Items to Consider at Next Thunder Basin Collaborative Meeting (Scheduled September 7<sup>th</sup>) include:

1. Formulating small collaborative sub-group comprised of USFS Line Officer, WGFD, TBGPEA, and a Wyoming Weed and Pest Representative to share detailed information regarding prairie dog control opportunities.



2. Implementing lethal control on the TBNG and adjacent lands in high priority areas discussed by the aforementioned subgroup.
3. With the recent plague outbreak, coordinate with County to promote human health and safety.

I look forward to bringing these items to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative scheduled on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and hope we can make mutual progress towards their implementation.

Respectfully,

Shane Walker

Cc List –

Brian Ferebee  
Thomas L Tidwell  
Sonny Perdue  
Senator Mike Enzi  
Senator John Barrasso  
Representative Liz Cheney  
Governor Matt Mead  
Doug Miyamoto  
Slade Franklin  
Defenders – Chamois  
TBGPEA – Dave Pelletz  
WYGF – Not sure who

**Comment [KS-]:** This list of CC is who the weed and pest CC'd in their initial letter. WGFD and TBGPEA have been added since they are listed as participants in the new sub-group. Defenders of WL have been added because they have been active participants in recent discussions. We are informed by Carolyn Upton that there is a substantial and official review process that would need to be completed before sending to this wider audience such as the Chief.

**State of Wyoming Select Federal Natural Resources Management  
Interim Committee  
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region**

**Acting Forest Supervisor, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and  
Thunder Basin National Grassland – Jason Kuiken**

**Forest Service Wyoming and Medicine Bow National Forest and  
Thunder Basin National Grassland Update  
August 30, 2017**

Chairman Von Flatern (Michael), Chairman Lindholm (Tyler) and Members of the Committee, good afternoon I am Jason Kuiken, Acting Forest Supervisor of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come before the Wyoming Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee.

We are proud to partner with the State of Wyoming, and look forward to the ongoing work we are able to do together for forest and grassland management.

As a Region, we have the honor of managing public lands in five states, and we are committed to working with our state partners to maintain and create resilient landscapes to ensure that the forests and grasslands continue to deliver goods and services that people want and need. From clean air and water to recreation opportunities and timber – it is always our goal to manage for multi-use purposes.

Today, I would like to provide an update on our Prairie Dog colony management efforts on the Thunder Basin National Grassland, and also talk with you about our continued work in Wyoming, specifically on the Medicine Bow National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grassland, that is being done to sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands.

First, I will begin with an update on our Prairie Dog colony management efforts. The Black-tailed prairie dog is designated by the Regional Forester as a sensitive species, and it is a Management Indicator Species on the Thunder Basin National Grassland. Black-tailed prairie dogs create habitat which cannot be duplicated by another species and is required, either directly or indirectly, by multiple other wildlife species some of which are also sensitive.

The management of prairie dog colonies on the Thunder Basin National Grassland has drawn considerable, long-term interest from state and federal agencies, private property owners, and environmental organizations. In 2015, Black-tailed prairie dog colonies occupied approximately 27,800 active acres of the Thunder Basin National Grassland's 553,000 total acreage, which is approximately 5%.

However, that number significantly increased in 2016 to a minimum of approximately 43,000 active acres. Due to increased populations and a very dry year, several areas of the Grassland contained grazing forage that was well below desired levels and several grazing association members came off early or reduced their numbers in 2016.

In May of 2017 Regional Forester Brian Ferebee and others visited the Grassland at the invitation of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association to hear

concerns from Grassland permittees and individual counties. As a result of the tour the Region has worked with the Forest and District to identify both short term and long term work that is needed to address some of those concerns.

This included a continuation of the rescinding of the ban on shooting Black-tailed prairie dogs on the TBNG for one year, until March 3, 2018, when we had planned to re-evaluate the conditions on the ground. Other commitments made to the Wyoming County Commissioners Association included direction that no dusting for plague control would occur this season on federal lands within the Grassland; that there would be an increase in the number of planned acres treated for boundary control in 2017 (10,000 acres in total) and that we would identify maximum flexibility for options such as supplemental feeding for permittees, invasive species control and restoration work to aid in the recovery of impacted areas. [The Region is also exploring the options for a potential plan amendment as it relates to the reintroduction of black footed ferrets.]

We are committed to continuing to work with the Thunder Basin Cooperative Working Group on these issues. The group was established to facilitate collaborative and cooperative communications, and to provide a consistent environment for input into current and future management actions. Participants include representatives from Campbell, Converse, Crook, Niobrara, and Weston Counties, as well as Conservation Districts, the Governor's Office, State Departments of Agriculture and Lands, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and several Federal agencies. There are six scheduled gatherings for 2017, with



the next being September 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, in Douglas, WY. The meetings are open to the public, and anyone interested is encouraged to attend.

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We are also working to increase the use of the Farm Bill and Wyden Authorities. Currently, Wyoming State Forestry Department (WSFD) has two active Good Neighbor Authority projects, and two more in process. This includes funding for a Cooperative Projects Contract Forester position shared between the Medicine Bow National Forest and Wyoming State Forestry Department; and a 140 acre pre-commercial thinning project on the Medicine Bow National Forest.

The Wyoming State Forestry Division is also working with the Rocky Mountain Regional State and Private Forestry to secure \$600,000 of Good Neighbor Authority as seed funding for future projects over the next three years. Additional funding would allow the Wyoming State Forestry Department to broaden current efforts and take on additional projects.

In conclusion, the Medicine Bow – Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland and other national forests in Wyoming provide many benefits to the people of this state and country. We recognize that there is much work to be done, and we will continue to increase the pace and scale of forest management activities by working across jurisdictions and leveraging partnership resources that will result in healthy, diverse and more resilient forests. We need a highly collaborative approach, and we will be coordinating closely with our neighbors to do work they see as important in creating and maintaining resilient landscapes and supporting economic development of rural communities.

Chairmen and Committee Members, this concludes my prepared remarks and I look forward to a continued, positive and productive working relationship with the state of Wyoming. I welcome questions from you and your Committee at this time.

**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** 1 Sep 2017 02:42:21 +0000  
**To:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** Thunder Basin Actions  
**Attachments:** TBNG\_Actions\_083117.docx

Jacque and Steve,

Please find attached a draft BP regarding actions in response to the May 2017 letter. I ended up using the BP format (and some of the language from the other BP) – but am happy to whittle it down if desired. For your information, the review that will occur prior to authorization of lethal control includes the overlay against current plague outbreak (and several other factors).

Please let me know if additional information or changes are needed.

Thank you,

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**







**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 14 Sep 2017 20:22:08 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS; Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS  
**Cc:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Subject:** Thunder Basin Briefing Papers  
**Attachments:** TBNG - PrairieDog ROD flexibilities.doc, TBNG Plan - Need for Change.doc, TBNG Plan - Collaboration.doc

Attached are three internal briefing papers on different aspects of the issues around prairie dog management, grassland restoration and the Thunder Basin Plan. Please let me know if any of them need editing or additional information. They are meant to answer some of Brian's questions and inform discussion around the path forward for potentially changing the grassland plan.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder**  
**Basin National Grassland**

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Laramie, WY 82070

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**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 14 Sep 2017 20:23:20 +0000  
**To:** Ruyle, Jennifer -FS  
**Cc:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS;Lohr, Steve -FS;Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Subject:** Thunder Basin Grassland Plan Questions  
**Attachments:** TBNG - PrairieDog ROD flexibilities.doc, TBNG Plan - Need for Change.doc, TBNG - FSH plan amendment.doc

Attached are three briefing papers that illustrate different issues that may inform a decision about whether or how to proceed with a decision to amend or revise the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Thunder Basin National Grassland. These three papers are:

1. PrairieDog ROD – this is excerpts from the ROD for a Plan amendment that incorporated a prairie dog strategy (with standards, decision screens, and other components) into the grassland plan.
2. Need for Change – this describes both issues/topics around which need for change may be focused, as well as potential plan components that may need to be addressed.
3. FSH – this is what I saw as 2012 planning rule directives that might influence the decision or the amendment/revision work itself.

Brian Ferebee asked that I coordinate with you to ask the WO (the team of Regis and Andrea) to review our information and advise us on potential paths forward. I would appreciate a discussion with you and them that includes:

- Have we articulated the situation clearly? Is there other information needed to inform the discussion or a potential decision?
- Given the current agency experience on plan amendments/revisions under the 2012 planning rule, what else might we need to consider about planning processes and options?
- What resources are available to assist the unit in potential paths forward?

Can you please share this information with them and ask if a call with them is the logical next step? Thank you.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder**  
**Basin National Grassland**

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**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 31 Oct 2017 22:45:17 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** Thunder Basin Statement  
**Attachments:** position statement.docx

Background for the attached – I am working with WY Dept of Ag and the Gov's Office on the future of public engagement for the Thunder Basin. Dept of Ag may have resources available to poll the members of the Working Group and regular participants in the Learning Series regarding their interest in a true collaborative that would provide consensus based recommendations to the FS. Or, determine if they are not interested in a collaborative and if they are interested in a different structure for public engagement. Something more traditional for public involvement? In order to do this, Dept of Ag asked me for a statement regarding ferrets (specifically) that they could share when they ask the question about the future of the public participation and that it specifically address the FS position on ferret reintroduction.

I talked to Brian last Thursday and asked if I could draft a statement for his approval that I could share. He said I should draft it and work on it with you. A draft is attached.

Questions for you:

- Is the statement accurate and the message we want to deliver at this time? Is there more to it than this?
- How (literally) would we deliver this statement to Wyoming to use in a poll or questionnaire? Is it a letter from Brian to the Governor? An email from me to Doug Miyamoto? Something in between?

On a separate but related note, I am meeting with Ken Paur on Thursday, after I meet with Brian, to discuss chartered non-FACA groups and if there might be an opportunity here to make one group for the Thunder Basin that meets expectations.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland**

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(b) (5)



**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** 16 Aug 2017 19:30:03 +0000  
**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS;Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-16-short form-draft-prairie-dog-letter\_jjk.docx, State of Wyoming Select Federal NR Committee MBR testimony\_08\_16\_2017\_Lohr and Henning edits\_jjk.docx

Carolyn and Steve,

Thank you for the time yesterday, good conversation, truly appreciated.

Please find attached the revised Weston County letter as discussed.

Also, please find attached the revised testimony based on comments received. Apparently the Wyoming timber outputs were provided by RO staff and used in other testimony recently – we are happy to use corrected numbers. Trying to learn the R2 process, do I need to send this testimony to anyone else for review/concurrence?

Thanks again and please don't hesitate to steer me in the right direction.

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**

Dear Mr. Darnell and Mr. Redding,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding prairie dogs colonies on Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) and adjacent State and Private Lands. Since 1960, we have been working closely with our local partners including Weston County to manage the Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) in a manner that is favorable for multiple lands uses and helps sustain local economic activities. Now more than ever, the need to strengthen these partnerships is evident.

We acknowledge the concerns you identified regarding the recent increase in prairie dog colony expansions, how they affect rangelands and pose a threat to human health and safety. You also requested the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides (such as Rozol) and fumigants, in addition to the existing use of zinc phosphide oats, because they are more effective in removing colonies that cause a human health and safety risk around residences.

We acknowledge that prairie dog colonies have been exceeding our objectives in Category 1, 2, and 3 lands, with at least 43,000 acres on TBNG in 2016. To address this situation, in March of 2017 we temporarily rescinded the ban on shooting prairie dogs in the 3.63 management area. We also worked with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations to identify and prioritize treatment areas for the potential application of zinc phosphide bait. Participating agreements to conduct control activities have been established and are being funded with over \$100,000 distributed to County Weed and Pest Districts to implement the activities.

I am requesting that proposed lethal control activities be discussed through a proposed new local collaborative sub-group made up of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), a representative of the Wyoming Weed and Pest districts, and me as the local line officer for the U.S. Forest Service. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with the Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands).

Regarding your request for the use of other forms of lethal control, the only rodenticide currently approved for use on prairie dog colonies on the TBNG is zinc phosphide. We will continue to coordinate with our Regional Office regarding the results of the 2015 Risk Assessment that was conducted for the use of Chlorophacinone (Rozol) on Forest Service lands, and the NEPA documentation and coordination with our state partners that would be needed prior to authorizing the use of additional rodenticides on the TBNG.

Considering the concerns that you have brought to our attention, our responsibility for human health and safety, and our 2015 Management Strategy to sustain prairie dog colonies, I am planning to introduce the following items for discussion and consideration at the next scheduled Thunder Basin Collaborative meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Items to Consider at Next Thunder Basin Collaborative Meeting (Scheduled September 7<sup>th</sup>) include:

1. Formulating small collaborative sub-group comprised of USFS Line Officer, WGFD, TBGPEA, and a Wyoming Weed and Pest Representative to share detailed information regarding prairie dog control opportunities.

2. Implementing lethal control on the TBNG and adjacent lands in high priority areas discussed by the aforementioned subgroup.
3. With the recent plague outbreak, coordinate with County to promote human health and safety.

I look forward to bringing these items to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative scheduled on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and hope we can make mutual progress towards their implementation.

Respectfully,

Shane Walker

Cc List –

Brian Ferebee  
Thomas L Tidwell  
Sonny Perdue  
Senator Mike Enzi  
Senator John Barrasso  
Representative Liz Cheney  
Governor Matt Mead  
Doug Miyamoto  
Slade Franklin  
Defenders – Chamois  
TBGPEA – Dave Pelletz  
WYGF – Not sure who

**Comment [KS-]:** This list of CC is who the weed and pest CC'd in their initial letter. WGFD and TBGPEA have been added since they are listed as participants in the new sub-group. Defenders of WL have been added because they have been active participants in recent discussions. We are informed by Carolyn Upton that there is a substantial and official review process that would need to be completed before sending to this wider audience such as the Chief.

**State of Wyoming Select Federal Natural Resources Management  
Interim Committee  
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region**

**Acting Forest Supervisor, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and  
Thunder Basin National Grassland – Jason Kuiken**

**Forest Service Wyoming and Medicine Bow National Forest and  
Thunder Basin National Grassland Update  
August 30, 2017**

Chairman Von Flatern (Michael), Chairman Lindholm (Tyler) and Members of the Committee, good afternoon I am Jason Kuiken, Acting Forest Supervisor of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come before the Wyoming Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee.

We are proud to partner with the State of Wyoming, and look forward to the ongoing work we are able to do together for forest and grassland management.

As a Region, we have the honor of managing public lands in five states, and we are committed to working with our state partners to maintain and create resilient landscapes to ensure that the forests and grasslands continue to deliver goods and services that people want and need. From clean air and water to recreation opportunities and timber – it is always our goal to manage for multi-use purposes.

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concerns from Grassland permittees and individual counties. As a result of the tour the Region has worked with the Forest and District to identify both short term and long term work that is needed to address some of those concerns.

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Chairmen and Committee Members, this concludes my prepared remarks and I look forward to a continued, positive and productive working relationship with the state of Wyoming. I welcome questions from you and your Committee at this time.



**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** 14 Aug 2017 22:39:00 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS;Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Cc:** Kozlowski, Steve -FS;Reynolds, Kelle A -FS;Walker, Michael S -FS  
**Subject:** Weston County Weed and Pest Response - Draft  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-14-long form-prairie-dog-letter-draft.docx, 2017-8-14-short form-draft-prairie-dog-letter.docx

Steve and Carolyn,

Please find attached two draft response letters to Weston County Weed and Pest Control District. We developed two possible letters – a long and short version. The longer version includes more ‘educational’ paragraphs – if nothing else, this version could be converted into a briefing paper for others at the RO and WO (we would do that).

A couple of questions to discuss are: do we include anything related to dusting and/or shooting ban here (initial thoughts here are generally no for shooting ban in the letter), do we include the entire cc list that Weston County did, and should the cc list be expanded to other partners? I believe that including a discussion (not commitment) on dusting in the letter could be good as this is a hot topic now with numerous partners and would be obvious if not included.

We are available to discuss this throughout the week – please let me know if either of you would like to set up a call, or I (or others here) could call you directly to discuss.

Many thanks,

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
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**Caring for the land and serving people**

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We acknowledge the concerns you identified regarding the recent increase in prairie dog colony expansions including:

- You have received formal complaints of prairie dogs moving onto State and private lands adjacent to TBNG.
- You have formally documented this expansion through a weed and pest resolution on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.
- The amount of occupied prairie dog habitat well exceeds 18,000 acres.
- Prairie dogs are negatively impacting the rangeland condition in Weston County.
- You advocate the use of a variety of lethal control methods, and secondary non-lethal methods where appropriate, to eliminate expansion beyond TBNG boundaries, and to control density within managed populations.

Regarding human health and safety:

- In the vicinity of residences, you request the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides (such as Rozol) and fumigants in addition to the existing use of zinc phosphide oats. Those methods can be applied more than once per season, and are more effective in removing colonies that cause a specific human health and safety risk around residences.

Prairie dog colony management on the Thunder Basin National Grassland is directed by two main documents, the 2015 Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Conservation Assessment and Management Strategy (hereafter referred to as The Management Strategy), and the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Thunder Basin National Grassland, as amended by the Plan Amendment #3 (2009) which includes direction for Prairie Dog Management.

The Management Strategy lists our objectives for prairie dog colonies at 18,000 acres or more in mapped areas identified as Category 1, which also provides for sustainable habitats for other sensitive species including burrowing owls, mountain plover, and swift fox. The Management Strategy also calls for the maintenance of 9,000 acres in the Category 2 areas, and 6,000 acres in Category 3 areas to allow for appropriate lower density distribution across the TBNG. Use of rodenticides within ½ mile of the TBNG boundary is prescribed when colonies inside the category 1 areas exceed 18,000 acres or when human health and safety are at risk.

We acknowledge that prairie dog colonies have largely expanded across the TBNG and the rest of eastern Wyoming over the last several years and have been exceeding our objectives in Category 1, 2, and 3 lands, with at least 43,000 acres on TBNG in 2016. To address this situation, in March of 2017 we temporarily rescinded the ban on shooting prairie dogs in the 3.63 management area. We have worked with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations to identify and prioritize treatment areas for the potential application of zinc phosphide bait. The grazing associations took the lead on identifying



and prioritizing treatment areas in collaboration/cooperation with their membership, the county weed and pest districts, and conservation districts. These treatments are in-line with our Management Strategy, and over \$100,000 in funds are being distributed in 2017 to County Weed and Pest Districts via new county agreements to facilitate treatments.

As you know, efforts to remove prairie dog colonies that affect both federal and adjacent lands are unlikely to be fully successful unless they are well coordinated. Similarly, large-scale removal of important colonies can affect the sustainability of sensitive wildlife species associated with prairie dog colonies and the prairie grassland ecosystem. Therefore, I am requesting that lethal control activities be coordinated through a newly established local collaborative sub-group made up of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) who manages sustainable wildlife populations, Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), who helps adjacent landowners cooperatively manage prairie grassland habitats and rangelands, a representative of the Wyoming Weed and Pest districts, who implements prairie dog control, and me, as the local line officer for the U.S. Forest Service. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with Forest Service's Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider management objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands). This sub-group would consult with and report their findings to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative, which has already been established.

Regarding your request for the use of other forms of lethal control, we are currently unable to employ the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides or fumigants on TBNG. The only rodenticide approved for use on prairie dog colonies on the TBNG is zinc phosphide. The US Forest Service completed a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment report in 2015 on the application of Chlorophacinone (Rozol) to control black-tailed Prairie Dogs. We will continue to coordinate with the US Forest Service Regional Office regarding NEPA documentation and coordination with our state partners that would be needed prior to authorizing the use of additional rodenticides on the TBNG.

#### Human Health and Safety Concerns

Our primary concern regarding Human Health and Safety is the potential spread of sylvatic plague through fleas that are present in prairie dog colonies. In rare cases, fleas can transfer from prairie dogs to pets, humans or wildlife species, thus causing the spread of plague to pets and humans. This risk can temporarily increase when the natural host (prairie dogs) die from either plague or from lethal control measures.

Plague has been present in eastern Wyoming for at least the past 15 years, with small outbreaks occurring regularly and larger events occurring on occasion. The last large event on the TBNG occurred from 2007-2009 and reduced the prairie dog colonies by over 80%. The current prairie dog colony areas had recovered from that event. In July 2017, a large plague event was again confirmed on the TBNG and surveys indicate that approximately 10,000 acres of prairie dog colonies have already been affected. Based on past large events, we estimate that 75% to 90% of the existing prairie dogs colonies on the TBNG are susceptible to dying by the spring of 2018.

Considering the concerns above that you have brought to our attention, along with our responsibility for Human Health and Safety, and our Management Direction to sustain a prairie dogs colonies in a manner consistent with the 2015 Management Strategy, I am planning to introduce the following items for

discussion and consideration at the next scheduled Thunder Basin Collaborative meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Items to Consider at Next Thunder Basin Collaborative Meeting:

1. Formulating a small collaborative sub-group comprised of USFS Line Officer, WGFD, TBGPEA, and a Wyoming Weed and Pest Representative. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with Forest Service's Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider management objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands).
2. Implementing lethal control in areas on the TBNG and adjacent lands in high priority areas discussed by the aforementioned subgroup.
3. Discuss limited use of dusting as a tool to promote human health and safety (kill fleas with plague prior to control measures), and to protect a small subset of core prairie dog colonies.
4. Reinstitute the shooting restriction within a subset of the 3.63 management area to include a small core of prairie dog colonies consistent with the Management Strategy in Category 1 boundaries and considering the outbreak of sylvatic plague detected in July.

Again, thank you for working together towards a solution that meets our combined needs. Working collaboratively with all of our partners to achieve the goal of resilient prairie grasslands, which includes the management of prairie dog colonies and associated species, is an important goal of our agency. I look forward to bringing these items to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative for discussion.

Respectfully,

Shane Walker

Cc List –

Brian Ferebee  
 Thomas L Tidwell  
 Sonny Perdue  
 Senator Mike Enzi  
 Senator John Barrasso  
 Representative Liz Cheney  
 Governor Matt Mead  
 Doug Miyamoto  
 Slade Franklin  
 Defenders – Chamois  
 TBGPEA – Dave Pelletz  
 WYGF – Not sure who

Dear Mr. Darnell and Mr. Redding,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding prairie dogs colonies on Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) and adjacent State and Private Lands. Since 1960, we have been working closely with our local partners including Weston County to manage the Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) in a manner that is favorable for multiple lands uses and helps sustain local economic activities. Now more than ever, the need to strengthen these partnerships is evident.

We acknowledge the concerns you identified regarding the recent increase in prairie dog colony expansions, how they affect rangelands and pose a threat to human health and safety. You also requested the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides (such as Rozol) and fumigants, in addition to the existing use of zinc phosphide oats, because they are more effective in removing colonies that cause a human health and safety risk around residences.

The 2015 Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Conservation Assessment and Management Strategy (hereafter referred to as The Management Strategy) lists our objectives for prairie dog colonies at 18,000 acres or more in mapped Category 1 areas; 9,000 acres in Category 2 areas, and 6,000 acres in Category 3 areas. These objectives allow for appropriate size and distribution of prairie dog colonies across the TBNG.

We acknowledge that prairie dog colonies have been exceeding our objectives in Category 1, 2, and 3 lands, with at least 43,000 acres on TBNG in 2016. To address this situation, in March of 2017 we temporarily rescinded the ban on shooting prairie dogs in the 3.63 management area. We also worked with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations to identify and prioritize treatment areas for the potential application of zinc phosphide bait. Participating agreements to conduct control activities have been established and are being funded with over \$100,000 distributed to County Weed and Pest Districts to implement the activities.

I am requesting that proposed lethal control activities be discussed through a new local collaborative sub-group made up of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), a representative of the Wyoming Weed and Pest districts, and me as the local line officer for the U.S. Forest Service. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with the Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands).

Regarding your request for the use of other forms of lethal control, the only rodenticide approved for use on prairie dog colonies on the TBNG is zinc phosphide. We will continue to coordinate with our Regional Office regarding the results of the 2015 Risk Assessment that was conducted for the use of Chlorophacinone (Rozol) on Forest Service lands, and the NEPA documentation and coordination with our state partners that would be needed prior to authorizing the use of additional rodenticides on the TBNG.

Considering the concerns that you have brought to our attention, our responsibility for Human Health and Safety, and our 2015 Management Strategy to sustain prairie dog colonies, I am planning to introduce the following items for discussion and consideration at the next scheduled Thunder Basin Collaborative meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Items to Consider at Next Thunder Basin Collaborative Meeting (Scheduled September 7<sup>th</sup>) include:

1. Formulating small collaborative sub-group comprised of USFS Line Officer, WGFD, TBGPEA, and a Wyoming Weed and Pest Representative to share detailed information regarding prairie dog control opportunities.
2. Implementing lethal control on the TBNG and adjacent lands in high priority areas discussed by the aforementioned subgroup.
3. Discuss limited use of dusting as a tool to promote human health and safety (kill fleas with plague prior to control measures), and to protect a small subset of core prairie dog colonies.

I look forward to bringing these items to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative scheduled on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and hope we can make mutual progress towards their implementation.

Respectfully,

Shane Walker

Cc List –

Brian Ferebee  
Thomas L Tidwell  
Sonny Perdue  
Senator Mike Enzi  
Senator John Barrasso  
Representative Liz Cheney  
Governor Matt Mead  
Doug Miyamoto  
Slade Franklin  
Defenders – Chamois  
TBGPEA – Dave Pelletz  
WYGF – Not sure who

**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 24 Oct 2017 16:53:44 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** Briefing Paper  
**Attachments:** MBRTB PDog\_Update\_10242017.doc

Steve, please see the attached briefing paper that described short term and long term restoration and prairie dog management actions on the Thunder Basin National Grassland. The intended audience for this paper is the Thunder Basin Working Group and specifically, Tammy Hooper and Jackie King of Congressman Cheney's staff. We discussed this at the last series of collaborative meetings on the Thunder Basin that were held on October 11<sup>th</sup>. This is an expected follow-up communication from the FS.

Please let me know if this is ready for me to share with these groups.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder**  
**Basin National Grassland**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**







**From:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Sent:** 14 Sep 2018 16:01:19 +0000  
**To:** Trussell, Heather -FS  
**Subject:** DoW BP  
**Attachments:** R2 TBNG Plan Amendment\_091118.docx



**Steve Lohr**  
**Director of Renewable Resources**

**Forest Service**  
**Rocky Mountain Region**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**







**From:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS  
**Sent:** 7 Jul 2017 20:33:35 +0000  
**To:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS; Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Cc:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS; Reynolds, Kelle A -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Douglas Budget: Pdogs & Collaboration  
**Attachments:** 20170705DouglasBudgetCollaborativeEffort.pdf

This article was published in the Douglas newspaper this week.

On another note..... Plague activity has significantly increased on the TBNG this summer. Best estimates at this time is that 8000 acres of prairie dog colonies have been affected. I would expect this plague episode to continue to run through the summer and fall. I anticipate increased interest from our NGO partners to use DeltaDust and reinstate the shooting ban.

We are proceeding with our restoration and cactus control G/A, along with the prairie dog control G/A with the weed and pest districts.



**Dennis L. Jaeger**  
**Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
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**Grassland**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**

---

**From:** Walker, Michael S -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 06, 2017 9:37 AM  
**To:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS <djaeger01@fs.fed.us>; Upton, Carolyn -FS <cupon@fs.fed.us>; Voos, Aaron T -FS <atvoos@fs.fed.us>; Hays, Misty A -FS <mahays@fs.fed.us>; Reynolds, Kelle A -FS <kareynolds@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** Douglas Budget: Pdogs & Collaboration

All,

Attached is a piece from the July 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Douglas Budget concerning prairie dogs in north eastern Wyoming with a specific focus on the grassland, and the collaborative effort. There is also an editorial piece about collaboration.

Best,  
Shane



Tanner Gamble leaps into the water at Glendo on Saturday evening during a trip to the lake for the holiday weekend. Glendo drew capacity crowds to the cool shores over the weekend and the campgrounds were all reserved by late Friday afternoon. More photos on page A-2.

Phillip Hamden photo

The proposal also would define a licensed premise as a property adjacent to or sharing a border with a building owned by the licensed holder or defined in a lease between the holder and the owner of the property. Basically, if you're a restaurant that serves beer, kids are allowed. If you're a bar that serves food, no kids.

The idea behind these changes is to coincide with amendments made by the state that allow counties and cities more

Please see

**LIQUOR AND YOU,**  
page A-2

# BOOM TOWN

Prairie dog population explosion in grassland raises questions, brings diverse interests together in unique management plan

By Jen Kocher  
and Kesly Porter

**D**riving down the dusty gravel road in his black pickup, Dave Pellatz frowns at a bare patch of dirt along the otherwise vibrant green rolling hills in Thunder Basin Grassland. The patch is getting bigger, and given the wet spring in Converse County this past year, such damage is incongruous.

Pellatz spends a lot of time snaking along these roads and knows the territory like the back of his hand. Anoma-

lies such as this one tend to catch his attention. Apart from his current position as executive director of Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association, an organization his mother help found in 1999, Pellatz grew up 10 miles down the road on a ranch just porteast of the small town of Bill.

Along with the uncharacteristic patches of dead grass, Pellatz has also noted an increase in the number of black-tailed prairie dog towns. He points to a field of burrows alongside the road as several heads pop out of the ground and stare at the truck before emitting a series of high-pitched chirps, their way of sounding the alarm.

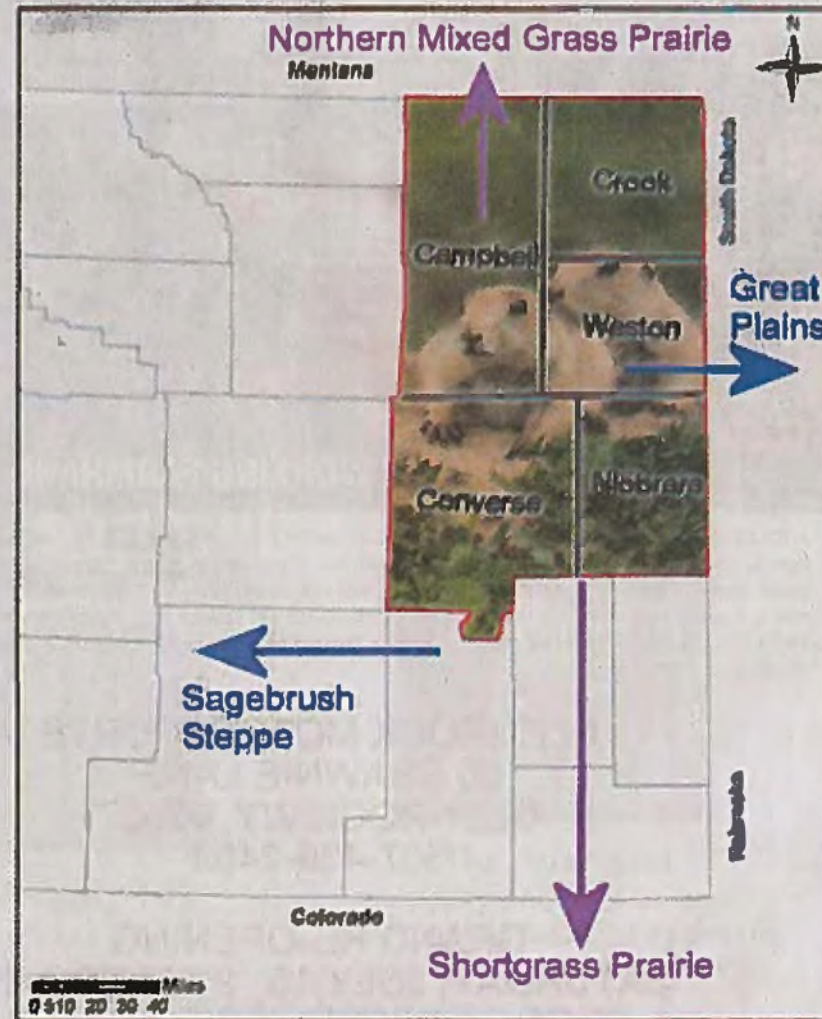
In the past 18 months, Pellatz has noted an alarming increase in the spread of colonies — almost from horizon to horizon. The first time in his life that he can ever remember seeing so many.

A recent mapping study commissioned by Dave's group shows that the size of prairie dog colonies have increased by an average of 240 percent from 2014 to 2016.

Along with the population explosion, the prairie dogs are also acting out of character. Dave brakes at the foot of a prairie dog town, which he notes has been more or less abandoned. Another rarity among the species as they don't typically eat themselves out of house and home.

Along with recklessly mowing down their food resources, they have also been migrating outside their short-grass habitat into the sagebrush steppe, typically indigenous only to sage grouse and other animals who benefit from the sage

Please see  
**TBNG PLAN,**  
page A-8



## This week's weather

	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
High	98	97	91	92	97
Low	61	61	59	61	63



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# BNG plan

from the front pa



**Dave Pellatz surveys the Thunder Basin National Grassland where prairie dogs have experienced a population boom of up to 240 percent in recent years. A grassland association is attempting to deal with the impacts of the surge in prairie dogs and the resulting damage to the ecosystem and ranching industry.**

Jennifer Kocher photos

ecosystem.

Because prairie dogs are prey, they like flat areas with low-lying shrubs that don't obscure their ability to see predators. The tall sage requires a lot of extra work to bite off the new leaders and foliage obstructing their view while destroying a food source for livestock. The fact that they are venturing out into territory that is not evolutionarily beneficial to their survival raises more eyebrows among the scientific community.

Prairie dogs are also now burrowing on steeper inclines and in river beds, which again, is not characteristic nor evolutionarily advantageous to their survival, Pellatz points out.

The atypical numbers and behavior are causing headaches and raising questions, not just among those in the scientific community but among the agricultural producers who strive to make a living off of this same land.

Balancing the equation between shared interests is always the tricky part, Pellatz concedes, and this is where he and his group are focusing their interests with a three-prong adaptive management strategy involving the ranchers, federal, state and county governments, energy companies and other private interests.

## A BALANCING ACT

As executive director of the Thunder Basin Grassland Ecosystem Association, Pellatz oversees 13.2 million acres of land encompassing five counties (Converse, Campbell, Crook, Niobrara and Weston) with the goal of proactively implementing conservation measures to protect the interests of ranchers, environmentalists, governments and oil and gas and coal companies. The grasslands are comprised

of roughly 74 percent private lands, 9 percent state-owned with the remaining land split between the federal Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service.

Few species are more contentious than the prairie dog when it comes to choosing sides. Depending on who you talk to, prairie dogs are either a pest that needs to be eliminated or a species which is integral to a healthy ecosystem.

On the pest side, prairie dogs compete for blue grama and other grasses that cattle and sheep eat, and if they're eating all the resources, then livestock producers are losing out.

An overabundance of prairie dogs can also be detrimental to residents in town in that as the animals burrow in closer proximity to residential areas, they can spread disease. Their underground habitats can also nefariously impact electrical wires and phone lines.

On the eco side, prairie dogs are a vital source in the food chain. Along with aerating the soil, prairie dogs are prey for a host of animals, including hawks and the endangered black-footed ferret, to name a few.

"It all comes down to money," according to Pellatz, "and this means balancing all of the relative interests and maximizing monetary value while managing resources, including wildlife. It is a complicated mix, and we can't afford to focus on just one species."

## MEETING IN THE MIDDLE ROAD

Up the road, a couple of hunters are pulled onto a gravel shoulder as they unload their rifles from the back of the SUV. For a Friday morning, these typically deserted roads are teeming with vehicles, many filled with hunters looking to rest their sights on the rodents.

Until this spring, shooting prairie dogs was off limits in the federal grassland, though this ban has been lifted this spring due to the increase in prairie dog numbers.

Shooting the prairie dogs is just one means of eradication, and Pellatz talks about a second initiative using poison to try to stave off the boom. The trick right now is trying to figure out what is causing the explosion in numbers, so they can come up with a feasible management plan.

This is where management can get a bit tricky as typically poison is not popular with some of the NGO groups like Defenders of Wildlife and World Wildlife Fund, all of whom have interests in managing the resources.

This is where managing relationships comes in handy, according to Pellatz, and it's a matter of reminding all parties involved that ultimately they are after the same goal of protecting and managing resources.

For the first time, all parties are sitting down at the same table and trying to come to terms with how to deal with the entire ecosystem, starting with the prairie dog but also including other species like the sage grouse.

Pellatz, watching the hunters taking up positions around the colony, explains that one problem is that the rodents are so cute - making them an easy target for environmentalists to use as a poster child, as opposed to something like a rattlesnake. At the same time, hunting helps to control the population that is burgeoning out of the control and throwing the ecosystem out of whack, which in turn is detrimental to other species and plants.

In turn, that has real-world impacts on ranching, mineral production and other uses of the public lands, including recreation and



**Blue grama grass is the main food source for both prairie dogs and livestock. With the boom in prairie dogs numbers, the competition for forage becomes a major struggle.**

hunting.

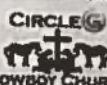
Like balancing the ecosystem, Pellatz believes a solution depends on balancing the needs and wants of all those interests... including the interests of the prairie dog.

## 17 SUMMER GYMKHANA

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 26<sup>th</sup>**  
Glendo Ranch Rodeo Arena

Practice Sessions  
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The Douglas Police Department in cooperation with the Converse County School District, Memorial Hospital of Converse County, and the Human Resource Council will be sponsoring **TWO FREE SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMS** for those students who attended 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades during this past 2016-2017 school year. (Incoming 2nd through 6th grade students.)



**JULY 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

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Ethan Brogan

Raising the Brow

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## EDITORIAL

# Collaboration works better than federal mandates

**T**he age-old, top-down style of managing wildlife and public resources has always had its critics because it inevitably ignores some segment — people or industry — that want a voice at the table. But it's been the way things have been done for years, even though they often seem to lead to bitter in-fighting over turf as well as substance with only a few successful outcomes that, not surprisingly, didn't end up in court. '88 Dave Pellatz' effort with the Thunder Basin Grassland Ecosystem Association offers a unique opportunity to bring any and every side together from the beginning. Instead of waiting to identify a problem and developing a set of possible solutions, then asking stakeholders which ones might work, Pellatz and others are starting with the stakeholder, asking them what the problems are, what might help and how to reach the goals. They have a long way to go, admittedly. But it is a step in the right direction on an important resource.

Which brings us to the latest areas of concern, prairie dogs.

With colonies on the grassland experiencing 250-800 percent growth in population this spring, the potential for disastrous consequences to the ecosystem and industries using the area are real. Finding real workable solutions that meet everyone's acceptance, if not full support, will be critical. Having the association in place to deal with it may prove to be truly fortuitous.

—Matt Adelman

## For the Fourth of July, let's have some common sense

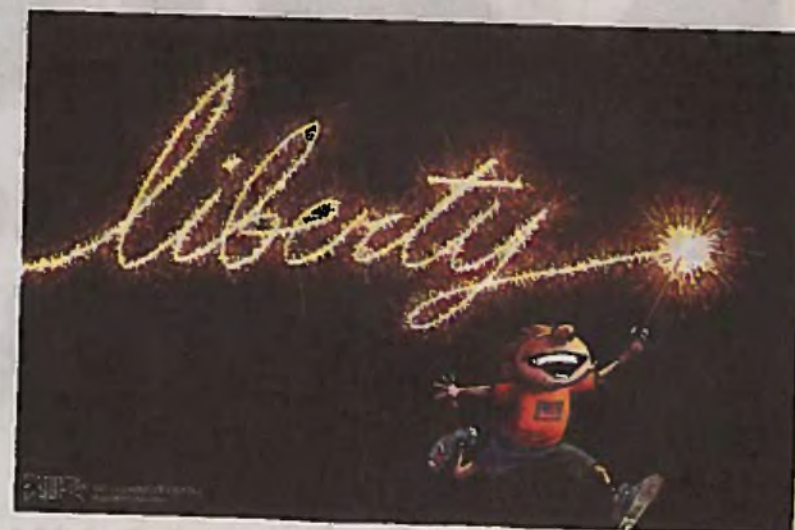
In the course of human events it is necessary, now and again, to renew our commitment to the principles and practices that made our country great in the first place.

Our country has always held what the Declaration of Independence says about certain "Truths": They are "self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Regrettably, we forget these simple truths sometimes.

To renew our passion for the free and equal pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, we need a new declaration that promotes civility, open conversation and common sense.

Look, when someone disagrees with a political position we hold, it does not make the individual a monster or something subhuman. It does



nobody any good to demonize or ridicule this person — not in a country founded on freedom of speech.

To renew our gratitude for the incredible freedoms we enjoy — freedoms that do not exist in many other

parts of the world — is it not better to engage your political opponents in civil conversation and debate rather than to prevent them from speaking at all?

Groupthink and political cor-

## Supreme Court strikes blow for religious liberty

Normally, the most notable part of a Supreme Court decision is not the dissent.

But Monday, Justice Sonia Sotomayor penned a dissent that is much more interesting in its transparency than the relatively mild majority opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts in a case being watched by everyone interested in the tension between church and state, and the status of that crumbling wall.

In *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*, a seven-person majority held that the state of Missouri could not single out faith-based organizations for exclusion from grants that would have paid for property maintenance. The facts are fairly simple. Trinity Lutheran is a church that also ran a preschool program. In 2012, it applied for a grant from a state program to make playgrounds safer. Its request for funds to resurface its playground was denied based on a state constitutional provision that forbade the use of taxpayer funding to religious institutions.

That provision was modeled on what is known as the "Blaine Amendment," a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution based in an antipathy toward Catholics. Over a century ago, in the wake of the Civil War, a Republican congressman named James Blaine proposed the amendment



Christine Flowers  
Syndicated columnist

Every time there is a suggestion that public funds are going to assist religious organizations, the fearsome prospect of a theocracy raises its head.

to prevent, in part, public money going to parochial schools that were filled with immigrant children.

Many states adopted the language of the original federal amendment, even though it

Please see  
**FLOWERS,**  
page A-5

rectness are killing open debate in our country. Too many university students, professors and administrators across our great land are not only shunning individuals who dare to challenge their status quo. They are aggressively, sometimes forcefully, infringing on their right to speak freely. They are issuing authoritarian campus speech codes.

If American citizens cannot openly discuss and criticize any and every idea on university campuses, then where, for goodness sakes, are they able to do so?

How did we arrive at a state of affairs in this country in which a person who criticizes ObamaCare — a person who argues that libertarian and free-market ideas can better address spiraling health-care costs and free up

Please see  
**PURCELL,**  
page A-5



**From:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS  
**Sent:** 21 Jul 2017 22:32:04 +0000  
**To:** Ferebee, Brian -FS  
**Cc:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS;Upton, Carolyn -FS;Kuiken, Jason J -FS;Reynolds, Kelle A -FS;Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Epizootic Plague Event on Thunder Basin National Grassland

Brian,  
Here is some additional information.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.



**Dennis L. Jaeger**  
**Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Thunder Basin National Grassland**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**

---

**From:** Walker, Michael S -FS  
**Sent:** Friday, July 21, 2017 4:20 PM  
**To:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS <djaeger01@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** Epizootic Plague Event on Thunder Basin National Grassland

#### **Background**

- Sylvatic plague has been present on the Thunder Basin National Grassland for at least 15-years.
- Small outbreaks of plague is a regular occurrence.
- The last epizootic event on the grassland occurred 2007-09, reducing the occupied acreage from approximately 16,000-acres to approximately 3,000-acres.
- The associated sensitive species (Mountain plover, Burrowing owl, and Swift fox) populations were significantly reduced for several years following the last epizootic event.
- A minimum of 43,000-acres of occupied prairie dog colony habitat on the TBNG in 2016.
- Acreage exceeded scientific understanding and TBNG plan expectations of growth and behavior.
- USGS study of plague resistance fleas on TBNG in 2015 and 2016 determined that the fleas are not yet resistant to Delta-dust.
- Planned to poison approximately 10,000-acres of occupied prairie dog colonies on NFS in collaboration and cooperation with partners, cooperators, and neighbors.

#### **Current Situation**

- Signs appear to indicate that the epizootic event started in fall 2017 in Weston county and moved west.
- A second outbreak started in Converse county – possibly in winter 2016/17 – and moved east.
- Approximately 6,000 – 8,000 acres of prairie dog colonies have died as to date.
- Anticipate approximately 75% of the prairie dog colony acres to die of plague by fall.
- Anticipate approximately 90% of the prairie dog colony acres to die of plague by spring 2018.
- No guarantee that plague will not kill 100% of the prairie dog colonies in conjunction with recreational shooting and poisoning.
- Collaborating and cooperating with partners, cooperators, and neighbors to monitor the progress of plague across northeastern Wyoming.
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department confirmed two prairie dogs from northeastern Wyoming died of sylvatic plague.

### **Actions**

- Monitoring the progress of plague in coordination and cooperation with our partners on National Forest System, state, and private lands.
- Executing poisoning priorities from the grazing associations this fall.
- Executing broad prairie dog control agreements with Converse, Campbell, and Weston counties.
- Agreements with counties will cover lethal and non-lethal control methods, and dusting for fleas.
- Explaining to the grazing associations and county weed and pest departments the rationale for dusting prairie dogs before poisoning.
- Planning to dust prairie dogs to kill fleas prior to poisoning on National Forest System lands.
- Developing a public service announcement in cooperation with the BLM, WGFD, Converse County, Campbell County, Weston County, Niobrara County, and the chamber of commerce's for communities in northeastern Wyoming in preparation to a large influx of visitors during the solar eclipse.

### **Recommendations**

- Apply shooting restrictions in select areas of the MA 3.63.
- Coordinate with partners and cooperators in applying Delta-dust in up to 3 colonies with high value and occupied habitat for multiple sensitive species in MA 3.63.
  - 12-people in 5-days can cover 1,000-acres.
- Dusting in the 3 priority colonies would occur for the next 3-6 years to ensure plague does not enter the colonies.
-

**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 8 Nov 2017 16:59:09 +0000  
**To:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Cc:** Bacon, Russell M -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Interagency statement - Thunder Basin  
**Attachments:** DRAFT position statement.docx

In the way of an update – I've been working on an interagency joint statement on the current position regarding black footed ferret reintroduction. This is needed, in part, because WY Dept of Ag is willing to help us focus our next steps with our collaborative, but they want this information in order to formulate some questions and potential paths forward. A final statement could also be shared with our working group members and other interested parties. So I drafted a statement, shared it with Steve Lohr, who did inform Brian F. that this is underway. I have talked to and sent the draft to WY G&F and USFWS for comment. The draft I have sent is attached and I am expecting comments next week.

FWS – I talked to Tyler Abbott who is supportive and asked me to get concurrence from Pete Gober and John Hughes. Pete responded that he will run it up to his regional director.

G&F – Steve Lohr and I spoke to Scott Smith last week. I sent Scott the attached draft this morning and asked for comments.

All of this might cause some agency discussions and I don't want anyone caught unaware. Please let me know if there are questions.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder**  
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**From:** Gober, Pete [[mailto:pete\\_gober@fws.gov](mailto:pete_gober@fws.gov)]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 08, 2017 9:09 AM  
**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <[cupton@fs.fed.us](mailto:cupton@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** john\_hughes@fws.gov; tyler\_abbott@fws.gov; Lohr, Steve -FS <[slohr@fs.fed.us](mailto:slohr@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** Re: Interagency statement

Carolyn:



We will need to brief our Regional Director on this up through supervisory channels. We will provide feedback as soon as possible.

Regards, Pete

On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 10:00 AM, Upton, Carolyn -FS <[cupton@fs.fed.us](mailto:cupton@fs.fed.us)> wrote:

John and Pete, I had a conversation this morning with Tyler about the attached draft statement. The topic is Thunder Basin National Grassland and our joint interagency position on black footed ferret reintroduction at this time. I read the statement to Tyler over the phone and he supports it, but wanted me to share it with both of you for comment and concurrence. Please send me your thoughts, or call me to discuss at the phone number below.

My objective is to get a brief statement out to our interagency partners, other government, NGOs, etc. on where we are right now in our management focus. All comments are welcome. We would like all three agencies to support with this statement for it to be an effective communication. I am also working with Scott Smith of Wyoming Game and Fish for their thoughts.

I told Tyler I'd follow up with him so please let me know your comments in the next week. Thank you.



**Carolyn Upton**  
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--

Pete Gober  
Black-footed Ferret Recovery Coordinator  
USFWS  
PO Box 190  
Wellington CO 80549  
720 626 5260 cell



**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 5 Oct 2017 19:59:04 +0000  
**To:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Question from Rep. Cheney's office on lethal control of prairie dogs

Another email responding to Rep. Cheney's office from her meeting with the Chief today.



**Carolyn Upton**  
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**From:** Voos, Aaron T -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 05, 2017 12:50 PM  
**To:** Walker, Michael S -FS <[mswalker@fs.fed.us](mailto:mswalker@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <[cupton@fs.fed.us](mailto:cupton@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** RE: Question from Rep. Cheney's office on lethal control of prairie dogs

Please see the email trail below. This came as a result of Cheney's meeting with the Chief today and an email brief from the WO dated 9/29/17. I will forward you that email.

I was just on a conf. call a few moments ago with Jace Ratzlaff (R2 Leg Affairs) and Martina Barnes (WO Leg Affairs). I explained that prairie dog colony control is part of our annual program of work on the Douglas RD and that the targeted acreage and \$\$ this year was part of a large collaborative effort which included public, grazing assoc., county, state, and federal input.

Martina will be responding to Cheney's office.

---

**From:** Voos, Aaron T -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 05, 2017 11:59 AM  
**To:** Walker, Michael S -FS <[mswalker@fs.fed.us](mailto:mswalker@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** FW: Question from Rep. Cheney's office on lethal control of prairie dogs



**Aaron Voos**  
**Public Affairs Specialist**

**Forest Service**  
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**From:** Ratzlaff, Jace I -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 05, 2017 11:46 AM  
**To:** Barnes, Martina -FS <[martinabarnes@fs.fed.us](mailto:martinabarnes@fs.fed.us)>; Voos, Aaron T -FS <[atvoos@fs.fed.us](mailto:atvoos@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** Neely, David -FS <[dneely@fs.fed.us](mailto:dneely@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** RE: Question from Rep. Cheney's office on lethal control of prairie dogs

Aaron you are the man on this? Can you answer the question posed below?

---

**From:** Barnes, Martina -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 05, 2017 10:56 AM  
**To:** Ratzlaff, Jace I -FS <[jratzlaff@fs.fed.us](mailto:jratzlaff@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** Neely, David -FS <[dneely@fs.fed.us](mailto:dneely@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** Question from Rep. Cheney's office on lethal control of prairie dogs  
**Importance:** High

Hi Jace – just got a call from their office, do you know or can you find out how long this 6,000 acre treatment effort has been in the works?

Approximately 6,000-acres have been prioritized for lethal prairie dog control efforts using zinc phosphide oats this year through cooperation with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations. Final review and authorization was completed on September 8, 2017. Lethal control will initiate on adjacent private and state lands in September and NFS lands October 1; per the Grassland plan for NFS lands for sensitive migratory bird conservation.

Thanks, soon...if possible,  
Martina



**Martina C. Barnes, AICP**  
**Legislative Affairs Specialist**

**Forest Service**  
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**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 5 Oct 2017 19:56:15 +0000  
**To:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up

Brian did receive a copy of the email below, from our WO to Rep. Cheney's staff. Just making sure you are aware. This looks like the work Steve pulled together.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
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**From:** Voos, Aaron T -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 05, 2017 12:50 PM  
**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <[cupton@fs.fed.us](mailto:cupton@fs.fed.us)>; Walker, Michael S -FS <[mswalker@fs.fed.us](mailto:mswalker@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** FW: Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up

---

**From:** Barnes, Martina -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 05, 2017 12:21 PM  
**To:** Voos, Aaron T -FS <[atvoos@fs.fed.us](mailto:atvoos@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** FW: Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up

FYI.



**Martina C. Barnes, AICP**  
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**From:** Barnes, Martina -FS

**Sent:** Friday, September 29, 2017 2:52 PM

**To:** 'Ahern, Kara' <[Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov)>; Heussner, Holly <[Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov](mailto:Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov)>

**Cc:** Hale, Cynthia A -FS <[cahale@fs.fed.us](mailto:cahale@fs.fed.us)>; Woodruff, Reginal -FS <[rwoodruff@fs.fed.us](mailto:rwoodruff@fs.fed.us)>; Davidson, Jamie L -FS <[jamiel Davidson@fs.fed.us](mailto:jamiel Davidson@fs.fed.us)>; Weldon, Leslie -FS <[lweldon@fs.fed.us](mailto:lweldon@fs.fed.us)>; Ferebee, Brian -FS <[bferebee@fs.fed.us](mailto:bferebee@fs.fed.us)>; Ratzlaff, Jace I -FS <[jratzloff@fs.fed.us](mailto:jratzloff@fs.fed.us)>; Neely, David -FS <[dneely@fs.fed.us](mailto:dneely@fs.fed.us)>; Rowley, Allen -FS <[arowley@fs.fed.us](mailto:arowley@fs.fed.us)>; Muehlhof, Eric W -FS <[ewmuehlhof@fs.fed.us](mailto:ewmuehlhof@fs.fed.us)>; Roessing, Megan -FS <[mroessing@fs.fed.us](mailto:mroessing@fs.fed.us)>; Armstrong, Katherine E -FS <[karmstrong@fs.fed.us](mailto:karmstrong@fs.fed.us)>

**Subject:** RE: Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up

Dear Kara and Holly,

We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person on September 5. Following this meeting, you provided us a list of issues you wanted us to address that dealt with the Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG), and the Roadless Rule and timber sales on Wyoming national forests. Below is a brief summary to address your questions.

1. Management of Thunder Basin National Grassland

- a. Prairie dog population control – Prairie dogs have expanded significantly in recent years and have impacted available forage for livestock. Despite the rapid population growth of prairie dogs, dusting has not been used as a management tool over the last two years due to the risk of catastrophic plague, and there are no immediate plans to dust prairie dogs. The TBNG was identified as a potential reintroduction site for black-footed ferret in the current grassland plan; however, there are no plans to reintroduce ferrets. The shooting ban was lifted and ‘no-shooting’ signs were removed. The closure order to permit shooting will be re-evaluated in March 2018. Approximately 6,000-acres have been prioritized for lethal prairie dog control efforts in cooperation with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations, as well as with Converse, Campbell, and Weston counties’ weed and pest districts.
- b. Invasive species control – Restoration activities are underway and will continue and expand on the TBNG. A five year \$1 million grant to the State of Wyoming will support projects to restore grassland condition through control of cheatgrass, salt cedar, Canada thistle, and prickly pear.
- c. Forest plan amendment – The Forest Service is currently assessing the need for a plan amendment to address prairie dog management on the TBNG. This assessment will involve the engagement of the Thunder Basin Collaborative Working Group.

2. Roadless Rule – The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule established prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on 3.2 million acres in Wyoming. The intent of the rule was to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within national forests in the context of multiple use management. Changes to the rule can only be made through legislative action or a state request to address state specific issues. However, several exceptions exist in the Roadless Rule that permit vegetation management. In Wyoming, approximately 50,222 acres have been cleared for treatment under these exceptions. Expanded use of these exceptions could be effective in addressing treatment needs.
3. Timber harvests –The Forest Service has increased timber harvests over the last five years; increases vary by forest, and range from a five to forty percent increase. The 2017 harvest levels should remain steady over the next few years as we treat areas impacted by mountain pine beetle and conduct harvests to prevent future infestations.

We want a healthy, productive grassland that is conducive to wildlife habitats and provides forage for livestock, and we will continue to work closely with mills and other industry to support to local communities.

If you wish additional information on any of these issues, I suggest we arrange a meeting or phone call with the Congressman, the Regional Forester, and/or Leslie Weldon. Thank you for sharing your concerns directly with us.

Sincerely,  
Martina Barnes



**Martina C. Barnes, AICP**  
**Legislative Affairs Specialist**

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**From:** Ahern, Kara [<mailto:Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 26, 2017 12:51 PM

**To:** Barnes, Martina -FS <[martinabarnes@fs.fed.us](mailto:martinabarnes@fs.fed.us)>; Heussner, Holly  
<[Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov](mailto:Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov)>

**Cc:** Hughes, Scott <[Scott.Hughes@mail.house.gov](mailto:Scott.Hughes@mail.house.gov)>; Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC  
<[Robyn.Whitney@osec.usda.gov](mailto:Robyn.Whitney@osec.usda.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up



Martina – just checking in to see if we will still be receiving updates this week. Liz is meeting with Chief Tooke next Tuesday. I am sure she will have follow up and questions on the updates and it would be great if we can resolve before their meeting.

Thanks.  
Kara

---

**From:** Barnes, Martina -FS [<mailto:martinabarnes@fs.fed.us>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 7, 2017 12:02 PM  
**To:** Heussner, Holly <[Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov](mailto:Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov)>  
**Cc:** Ahern, Kara <[Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov)>; Hughes, Scott <[Scott.Hughes@mail.house.gov](mailto:Scott.Hughes@mail.house.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up

Hi Holly,  
Thanks for getting this list to us. We'll get back to you before the end of the month.

--Martina



**Martina C. Barnes, AICP**  
**Legislative Affairs Specialist**  
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**From:** Heussner, Holly [<mailto:Holly.Heussner@mail.house.gov>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 06, 2017 5:31 PM  
**To:** Barnes, Martina -FS <[martinabarnes@fs.fed.us](mailto:martinabarnes@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** Ahern, Kara <[Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kara.Ahern@mail.house.gov)>; Hughes, Scott <[Scott.Hughes@mail.house.gov](mailto:Scott.Hughes@mail.house.gov)>  
**Subject:** Rep. Cheney meeting follow-up

Leslie, Allan, Martina,

Representative Cheney is grateful to you all for meeting with her today to discuss important USFS related issues her constituents have been dealing with for many years. As we discussed in our meeting, I have compiled the list of action items that were discussed in today's meeting.

Liz was happy to hear directly from you that the USFS HQ is fully aware of and understands the urgency of making fundamental management changes to rescue and restore areas of the Thunder

Basin National Grassland. As we discussed, ranchers, community commissioners and other stakeholders have lived through years of the federal government pursuing policies that allowed these lands to be decimated by Prairie Dogs. They deserve to see progress and real results. We look forward to working with you to make the necessary changes needed to preserve the land and protect the livelihoods of our ranchers and the health of the Grasslands.

We look forward to responses back to these issues and planned follow up by the end of September. Please feel free to contact me directly at 202-225-2311 if you need anything from our office.

**Thunder Basin Grasslands:**

As we discussed, we'd like confirmation of the following:

- There will be no dusting of prairie dog colonies against the plague.
- The black footed ferret will not be introduced at Thunder Basin National Grassland and the USFS will coordinate with USFWS to release a statement indicating this decision.
- USFS will provide a status update on requests and timeline for rangeland restoration and the use of poison to control prairie dog populations.
- The USFS will continue to allow the shooting of prairie dogs and remove the 'no-shooting' signs.
- The USFS will determine and report back to us on the process for amending the Grasslands Forest Management Plan to establish a new prairie dog policy that will enable effective management, and restore the health of the range, including grazing areas.

**Roadless Rule:**

- The USFS will report back on what can be done to either amend or repeal the Roadless Rule in order to restore the health of our national forests.
- Report will include a list of roadless areas also designated as needing mechanical thinning.

**Timber Sales:**

- The USFS will report to our office on plans and next steps to increase timber harvests and sales in national forests in Wyoming, in particular. The USFS will consider the quantity of additional harvesting and sales necessary to improve the health of the forests, as well as to ensure a return of investment in mills to process timber harvested.

Thank you,

**Holly Reagan Heussner**

Congressman Liz Cheney | WY-At Large  
(202) 225 - 2311

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**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 8 Nov 2017 23:47:35 +0000  
**To:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS; Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Dog and Plague Question  
**Attachments:** MBRTB PDog\_Update\_10242017.pdf

This message looks familiar...

Just sharing because Tyler sent this to the Office of the Secretary – although I have to think that is Secretary of Interior.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Deputy Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland**

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**From:** Abbott, Tyler [mailto:tyler\_abbott@fws.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 08, 2017 4:17 PM  
**To:** Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC <Robyn.Whitney@osec.usda.gov>  
**Cc:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <cupton@fs.fed.us>; Pete Gober <Pete\_Gober@fws.gov>; John Hughes <john\_hughes@fws.gov>  
**Subject:** Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Dog and Plague Question

Good afternoon Robyn,

Per our discussion earlier today, the following detailed information (and attachment) was provided to me by the Forest Service regarding prairie dog management and the plague outbreak that occurred earlier this year on the Thunder Basin National Grassland located in northeast Wyoming.

- No dusting was completed this season. Brian Ferebee, Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region, informed the Wyoming County Commissioners Association in the spring of 2017 that no dusting for plague control will occur this season on federal lands within the grassland. This has been discussed in public forums and with the Thunder Basin Working Group over the past several months. No dusting was done in 2017.
- Thunder Basin Working Group and interested members of the public were emailed the document that is attached to this email in late October. This document describes management

activities and actions ongoing on the Thunder Basin. That document states: "...dusting for plague was discontinued based on feedback received during a trip to the Thunder Basin by Forest Service leadership in May 2017." This document is available to the public on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland public website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/mbr/landmanagement/?cid=stelprd3802740> Please see the heading "Recent Press Releases".

- Boundary control activities are also described in detail in the attached document. This document states:

*Approximately 5,200 acres of lethal control (rolled oats with zinc phosphide) were authorized in September 2017 and are currently being implemented by Campbell, Converse, and Weston County Weed & Pest Districts. Areas designated for treatment were identified by the grazing associations and local land owners and informed by information gathered in 2017 at the Thunder Basin Collaborative Learning Series Public Workshops and the Cooperative Working Group meetings. The Forest Service contributed \$135,000 to agreements for these colony control efforts. As cooperating partners, the Wyoming counties contributed approximately \$108,000, in cash and in-kind, to the prairie dog control efforts.*

*An additional 1,100 acres of lethal prairie dog control were completed by private contractors in October of 2016. Funding for this work (\$60K) was provided by the Forest Service as part of a larger FY16 contract that included both lethal and non-lethal control methods.*

*Non-lethal control activities and other proposed projects have also been informed by information gathered at the Thunder Basin Learning Series Public Workshops, the Cooperative Working Group meetings, and grazing association meetings. Specifically, a proposal for construction of non-lethal fencing in the Fiddleback Allotment was included in the 2016 contract but has not yet been implemented.*

- Also under the heading "Recent Press Releases" is the July 14, 2017, Wyoming Department of Health news releases titled "Plague Confirmed in Northeastern Wyoming Prairie Dog" illustrating that the public has been notified of the plague situation.

I hope this answers all of your questions-- please feel free to call if you need anything else.

Thank you,

Tyler

Tyler Abbott, Wyoming Field Supervisor

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wyoming Ecological Services Field Office

5353 Yellowstone Road, Suite 308A  
Cheyenne, WY 82009  
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Cell: (307) 286-7242

[tyler\\_abbott@fws.gov](mailto:tyler_abbott@fws.gov)







**From:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Sent:** 6 Sep 2018 14:21:16 +0000  
**To:** Rice, Richard - FS  
**Subject:** FW: Thunder Basin Prairie Dog Issues  
**Attachments:** FS - Thunder Basin Prairie Dog-Ferret.pdf, ATT00001.htm

FYI...



**Steve Lohr**  
**Director of Renewable Resources**

**Forest Service**  
**Rocky Mountain Region**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**

---

**From:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 05, 2018 5:43 PM  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS <[slohr@fs.fed.us](mailto:slohr@fs.fed.us)>; Sloan, Jenna - FS <[jennasloan@fs.fed.us](mailto:jennasloan@fs.fed.us)>; Bierman, Sylvia (Clark)- FS <[sbierman@fs.fed.us](mailto:sbierman@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Thunder Basin Prairie Dog Issues

Well  
Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Jonathan B Ratner" (b) (6)  
**Date:** September 5, 2018 at 2:32:57 PM MDT  
**To:** <[rmbacon@fs.fed.us](mailto:rmbacon@fs.fed.us)>, <[bferebee@fs.fed.us](mailto:bferebee@fs.fed.us)>, <[jabuchanan@fs.fed.us](mailto:jabuchanan@fs.fed.us)>, <[rrobertson@fs.fed.us](mailto:rrobertson@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** Thunder Basin Prairie Dog Issues

Please see attached.

Thanks,

Jonathan B Ratner  
WWP – Wyoming Office  
PO Box 171



Bondurant, WY 82922  
Tel: 877-746-3628  
Fax: 208-475-4702

---



**Western  
Watersheds  
Project**

**Wyoming Office**

**PO Box 171**

**Bondurant, WY 82922**

**Email: [Wyoming@WesternWatersheds.org](mailto:Wyoming@WesternWatersheds.org)**

**Web site: [www.WesternWatersheds.org](http://www.WesternWatersheds.org)**

---

*Working to protect and restore Western Watersheds*

Russ Bacon

Forest Supervisor

2468 Jackson Street

Laramie, WY 82070-6535



**Western  
Watersheds  
Project**

**Wyoming Office**  
**PO Box 171**  
**Bondurant, WY 82922**  
**Tel: (877) 746-3628**  
**Fax: (208) 475-4702**  
**Email: [Wyoming@WesternWatersheds.org](mailto:Wyoming@WesternWatersheds.org)**  
**Web site: [www.WesternWatersheds.org](http://www.WesternWatersheds.org)**

*Working to protect and restore Western Watersheds*

---

Russ Bacon  
Forest Supervisor  
Medicine Bow – Routt National Forest/Thunder Basin National Grassland  
2468 Jackson Street  
Laramie, WY 82070-6535

September 5, 2018

Dear Supervisor Bacon:

I am writing to express our dismay at efforts by livestock grazing permittees on the Thunder Basin National Grassland to advocate for greater poisoning of black-tailed prairie dogs and abandonment of black-footed ferret recovery efforts on the Thunder Basin. As a direct result of efforts by the livestock industry to weaken protections for prairie dogs and frustrate the return of the indigenous black-footed ferret on the Thunder Basin, I have been instructed to increase our scrutiny of livestock grazing leases and activities in this area and to ramp up our advocacy on behalf of prairie dog and black-footed ferret recovery efforts.

The black-tailed prairie dog is considered a “keystone species” for shortgrass and mixed-grass prairie ecosystems, forming a key food source for numerous species including swift foxes and birds of prey, and creating unique habitat features that are relied upon by a variety of rare native wildlife including, most notably, the burrowing owl which prefers to nest in active prairie dog towns. The black-tailed prairie dog is a Region 2 Sensitive Species, is valued as native wildlife by the public, and as a linchpin of grassland wildlife assemblages, should not be targeted for lethal control for any reason on federal public lands. Such livestock permittees who find it necessary to kill of native wildlife to advance their own profit motives should be encouraged by the Forest Service to remove their livestock from public lands and find private pasturage instead, so they will not create conflicts for native wildlife on the public lands.

The black-footed ferret is an obligate predator of prairie dogs, and lives exclusively in active prairie dog colonies. Ferrets are native to the Thunder Basin National Grassland, and we believe the Forest Service has a legal and moral obligation to provide sufficient habitat for this species on the Thunder Basin.

WWP strongly supports the Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Habitat (MA 3.63) designation in the Thunder Basin Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan, and furthermore urges the Forest Service to maximally implement the recovery and expansion of black-tailed prairie dog colonies both inside and outside this zone, with the goal of creating an adequate acreage of contiguous (within 7 km of each other) and occupied prairie dog colonies on the Thunder Basin national Grassland to support the reintroduction of the endangered black-footed ferret.

It has been a while since we last talked, just before you left Kemmerer. In recent years, the Thunder Basin National Grassland has received a lesser amount of attention so we could focus on other priority issues. Both myself and WWP's Executive Director, Erik Molvar were deeply disturbed by efforts by Karen Budd-Falen and area permittees to pressure the Forest Service into reneging on direction for prairie dog management emphasis areas on the National Grasslands.

It is our understanding that captive ferrets are living out their lives and dying in captive facilities for a lack of prairie dog colonies of sufficient expanse. Because of the widespread (and indefensible) use of zinc phosphide, Rozol, and other poisons, black-tailed prairie dogs remain limited to about 5% of their historic natural range. Public lands managed by the Forest Service and other federal agencies, with their multiple-use mandates, provide the strongest candidates for prairie dog expansion, and ultimately, for black-footed ferret reintroduction. Prairie dogs should not be poisoned here.

As a result, I plan to ramp up WWP's oversight program of Thunder Basin National Grasslands livestock management program. Please double-check to ensure that I am listed as an interested party to receive notifications of any and all NEPA processes regarding livestock grazing lease renewals, livestock-related infrastructure projects, and vegetation treatment projects that could affect both native wildlife and livestock grazing. Next week, I will begin by submitting a FOIA to refresh our records regarding livestock grazing and prairie dog management issues.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonathan B Ratner". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and a long, sweeping underline.

Jonathan B Ratner  
Director – Wyoming Office





**From:** Baca, Valerie -FS  
**Sent:** 22 Aug 2017 22:27:26 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-16-short form-draft-prairie-dog-letter\_jjk.docx, State of Wyoming Select Federal NR Committee MBR testimony\_08\_16\_2017\_Lohr and Henning edits\_jjk\_2.docx

Here's Jason's revised testimony. Let's touch base in the morning.

---

**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 22, 2017 3:44 PM  
**To:** Baca, Valerie -FS <vbaca@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** FW: Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony

Valerie,

Here is the revised testimony.

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National Grassland**

p: 307-745-2400  
c: 509-679-6958  
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2468 Jackson St  
Laramie, WY 82070  
[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)



Caring for the land and serving people

---

**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 16, 2017 1:47 PM  
**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <[cupton@fs.fed.us](mailto:cupton@fs.fed.us)>; Lohr, Steve -FS <[slohr@fs.fed.us](mailto:slohr@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** RE: Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony

Carolyn and Steve,

Delete the previous message.

As things tend to happen this way, 12 minutes after I sent this, Sharon provided Sandy with the correct numbers. Please see this version instead for the revised testimony – the attached Weston County letter is unchanged.



Sorry for the confusion,

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National**  
**Grassland**

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[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)



**Caring for the land and serving people**

---

**From:** Kuiken, Jason J -FS

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 16, 2017 1:30 PM

**To:** Upton, Carolyn -FS <[cupton@fs.fed.us](mailto:cupton@fs.fed.us)>; Lohr, Steve -FS <[slohr@fs.fed.us](mailto:slohr@fs.fed.us)>

**Subject:** Weston County revised response and Revised Testimony

Carolyn and Steve,

Thank you for the time yesterday, good conversation, truly appreciated.

Please find attached the revised Weston County letter as discussed.

Also, please find attached the revised testimony based on comments received. Apparently the Wyoming timber outputs were provided by RO staff and used in other testimony recently – we are happy to use corrected numbers. Trying to learn the R2 process, do I need to send this testimony to anyone else for review/concurrence?

Thanks again and please don't hesitate to steer me in the right direction.

Jason



**Jason Kuiken**  
**Acting Forest Supervisor**

**Forest Service**  
**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National**  
**Grassland**

**p: 307-745-2400**  
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**Caring for the land and serving people**

Dear Mr. Darnell and Mr. Redding,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding prairie dogs colonies on Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) and adjacent State and Private Lands. Since 1960, we have been working closely with our local partners including Weston County to manage the Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) in a manner that is favorable for multiple lands uses and helps sustain local economic activities. Now more than ever, the need to strengthen these partnerships is evident.

We acknowledge the concerns you identified regarding the recent increase in prairie dog colony expansions, how they affect rangelands and pose a threat to human health and safety. You also requested the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides (such as Rozol) and fumigants, in addition to the existing use of zinc phosphide oats, because they are more effective in removing colonies that cause a human health and safety risk around residences.

We acknowledge that prairie dog colonies have been exceeding our objectives in Category 1, 2, and 3 lands, with at least 43,000 acres on TBNG in 2016. To address this situation, in March of 2017 we temporarily rescinded the ban on shooting prairie dogs in the 3.63 management area. We also worked with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations to identify and prioritize treatment areas for the potential application of zinc phosphide bait. Participating agreements to conduct control activities have been established and are being funded with over \$100,000 distributed to County Weed and Pest Districts to implement the activities.

I am requesting that proposed lethal control activities be discussed through a proposed new local collaborative sub-group made up of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), a representative of the Wyoming Weed and Pest districts, and me as the local line officer for the U.S. Forest Service. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with the Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands).

Regarding your request for the use of other forms of lethal control, the only rodenticide currently approved for use on prairie dog colonies on the TBNG is zinc phosphide. We will continue to coordinate with our Regional Office regarding the results of the 2015 Risk Assessment that was conducted for the use of Chlorophacinone (Rozol) on Forest Service lands, and the NEPA documentation and coordination with our state partners that would be needed prior to authorizing the use of additional rodenticides on the TBNG.

Considering the concerns that you have brought to our attention, our responsibility for human health and safety, and our 2015 Management Strategy to sustain prairie dog colonies, I am planning to introduce the following items for discussion and consideration at the next scheduled Thunder Basin Collaborative meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Items to Consider at Next Thunder Basin Collaborative Meeting (Scheduled September 7<sup>th</sup>) include:

1. Formulating small collaborative sub-group comprised of USFS Line Officer, WGFD, TBGPEA, and a Wyoming Weed and Pest Representative to share detailed information regarding prairie dog control opportunities.

2. Implementing lethal control on the TBNG and adjacent lands in high priority areas discussed by the aforementioned subgroup.
3. With the recent plague outbreak, coordinate with County to promote human health and safety.

I look forward to bringing these items to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative scheduled on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and hope we can make mutual progress towards their implementation.

Respectfully,

Shane Walker

Cc List –

Brian Ferebee  
Thomas L Tidwell  
Sonny Perdue  
Senator Mike Enzi  
Senator John Barrasso  
Representative Liz Cheney  
Governor Matt Mead  
Doug Miyamoto  
Slade Franklin  
Defenders – Chamois  
TBGPEA – Dave Pelletz  
WYGF – Not sure who

**State of Wyoming Select Federal Natural Resources Management  
Interim Committee  
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region**

**Acting Forest Supervisor, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and  
Thunder Basin National Grassland – Jason Kuiken**

**Forest Service Wyoming and Medicine Bow National Forest and  
Thunder Basin National Grassland Update  
August 30, 2017**

Chairman Von Flatern (Michael), Chairman Lindholm (Tyler) and Members of the Committee, good afternoon I am Jason Kuiken, Acting Forest Supervisor of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come before the Wyoming Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee.

We are proud to partner with the State of Wyoming, and look forward to the ongoing work we are able to do together for forest and grassland management.

As a Region, we have the honor of managing public lands in five states, and we are committed to working with our state partners to maintain and create resilient landscapes to ensure that the forests and grasslands continue to deliver goods and services that people want and need. From clean air and water to recreation opportunities and timber – it is always our goal to manage for multi-use purposes.

Today, I would like to provide an update on our Prairie Dog colony management efforts on the Thunder Basin National Grassland, and also talk with you about our continued work in Wyoming, specifically on the Medicine Bow National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grassland, that is being done to sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands.

First, I will begin with an update on our Prairie Dog colony management efforts. The Black-tailed prairie dog is designated by the Regional Forester as a sensitive species, and it is a Management Indicator Species on the Thunder Basin National Grassland. Black-tailed prairie dogs create habitat which cannot be duplicated by another species and is required, either directly or indirectly, by multiple other wildlife species some of which are also sensitive.

The management of prairie dog colonies on the Thunder Basin National Grassland has drawn considerable, long-term interest from state and federal agencies, private property owners, and environmental organizations. In 2015, Black-tailed prairie dog colonies occupied approximately 27,800 active acres of the Thunder Basin National Grassland's 553,000 total acreage, which is approximately 5%.

However, that number significantly increased in 2016 to a minimum of approximately 43,000 active acres. Due to increased populations and a very dry year, several areas of the Grassland contained grazing forage that was well below desired levels and several grazing association members came off early or reduced their numbers in 2016.

In May of 2017 Regional Forester Brian Ferebee and others visited the Grassland at the invitation of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association to hear



concerns from Grassland permittees and individual counties. As a result of the tour the Region has worked with the Forest and District to identify both short term and long term work that is needed to address some of those concerns.

This included a continuation of the rescinding of the ban on shooting Black-tailed prairie dogs on the TBNG for one year, until March 3, 2018, when we had planned to re-evaluate the conditions on the ground. Other commitments made to the Wyoming County Commissioners Association included direction that no dusting for plague control would occur this season on federal lands within the Grassland; that there would be an increase in the number of planned acres treated for boundary control in 2017 (10,000 acres in total) and that we would identify maximum flexibility for options such as supplemental feeding for permittees, invasive species control and restoration work to aid in the recovery of impacted areas. [The Region is also exploring the options for a potential plan amendment as it relates to the reintroduction of black footed ferrets.]

We are committed to continuing to work with the Thunder Basin Cooperative Working Group on these issues. The group was established to facilitate collaborative and cooperative communications, and to provide a consistent environment for input into current and future management actions. Participants include representatives from Campbell, Converse, Crook, Niobrara, and Weston Counties, as well as Conservation Districts, the Governor's Office, State Departments of Agriculture and Lands, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and several Federal agencies. There are six scheduled gatherings for 2017, with

the next being September 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, in Douglas, WY. The meetings are open to the public, and anyone interested is encouraged to attend.

Next, I'd like to provide an update on the Mountain Pine Beetle on the Medicine Bow National Forest. The latest USFS Forest Health Protection's evaluation of Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) activity on the Forest is that the beetle is back to endemic levels. There have been significant changes on the Forest due to Mountain Pine Beetle and the Forest has increased its timber harvest levels for the last several years in order to address the infestation (100,000 CCF or 50 MMBF). With the ongoing need for forest health treatments, we are committed to maintaining, and likely increasing, the timber harvest level in the near term.

This is similar across the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service as we have prioritized working with the State of Wyoming in an effort to carry out the recommendations from Governor Mead's Task Force on Forests Final Report and the Wyoming Forest Action Plan. The Region has been meeting or exceeding our Regional timber targets for several years now. The 2016, timber harvest represented a six percent increase over our 2015, numbers, which represents a 40 percent increase from five years ago. This is a continuing upward trend we are proud of, and Wyoming has played a vital role in achieving those timber harvest numbers. Nearly 30% of the Regional volume sold in 2016, came from National Forests in Wyoming. For the state, that represents approximately 330 jobs and \$14 million in labor income.

The Medicine Bow National Forest continues to place a high priority on creating resilient landscapes impacted by the bug epidemic. We are planning a landscape-scale proposal for future tree cutting and prescribed burning in the Sierra Madre and Snowy Ranges of the Forest. A public comment period is underway for the initial Landscape Vegetation Analysis project proposal, which includes over 350,000 acres in the proposed action as potentially treatable over the next 10-15 years. The Landscape Vegetation Analysis project is intended to authorize flexible management of Forest vegetation in an effort to utilize beetle-killed timber while it is still marketable and to reduce the risk of wildfire near communities. This is an excellent example of how we will continue with vegetation treatments in order to make the Forest more resilient to insects and fire.

We are also working to increase the use of the Farm Bill and Wyden Authorities. Currently, Wyoming State Forestry Department (WSFD) has two active Good Neighbor Authority projects, and two more in process. This includes funding for a Cooperative Projects Contract Forester position shared between the Medicine Bow National Forest and Wyoming State Forestry Department; and a 140 acre pre-commercial thinning project on the Medicine Bow National Forest.

The Wyoming State Forestry Division is also working with the Rocky Mountain Regional State and Private Forestry to secure \$600,000 of Good Neighbor Authority as seed funding for future projects over the next three years. Additional funding would allow the Wyoming State Forestry Department to broaden current efforts and take on additional projects.

In conclusion, the Medicine Bow – Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland and other national forests in Wyoming provide many benefits to the people of this state and country. We recognize that there is much work to be done, and we will continue to increase the pace and scale of forest management activities by working across jurisdictions and leveraging partnership resources that will result in healthy, diverse and more resilient forests. We need a highly collaborative approach, and we will be coordinating closely with our neighbors to do work they see as important in creating and maintaining resilient landscapes and supporting economic development of rural communities.

Chairmen and Committee Members, this concludes my prepared remarks and I look forward to a continued, positive and productive working relationship with the state of Wyoming. I welcome questions from you and your Committee at this time.



**From:** Upton, Carolyn -FS  
**Sent:** 8 Aug 2017 13:16:44 +0000  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Subject:** FW: Weston County Weed & Pest Resolution and Letter  
**Attachments:** 20170719LetterWCWP\_USFS.pdf, 20170721ResolutionWCWP\_USFS.pdf  
**Importance:** High

Just so you have it. Note the CC list in the letter. The response to this letter has to address Rozol and the shooting ban and I'm going to have a call with the Forest this week to discuss their proposals. I think they want to stay away from Rozol for now, get a committee together (sub-committee of the prairie dog collaborative group) that would work on control activities specifically. I think they also want to propose or consider a very, very limited shooting ban in the core. So we have to talk.



**Carolyn Upton**  
**Acting Director, Strategic Planning**

**Forest Service**  
**Rocky Mountain Region**

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**Caring for the land and serving people**

---

**From:** Walker, Michael S -FS  
**Sent:** Monday, July 24, 2017 11:51 AM  
**To:** Jaeger, Dennis -FS <djaeger01@fs.fed.us>  
**Cc:** Hays, Misty A -FS <mahays@fs.fed.us>; Proctor, Geri A -FS <gproctor@fs.fed.us>; Alpe, Mike J -FS <malpe@fs.fed.us>; Reynolds, Kelle A -FS <kareynolds@fs.fed.us>; Kuiken, Jason J -FS <jkuiken@fs.fed.us>; Upton, Carolyn -FS <cupton@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** Weston County Weed & Pest Resolution and Letter  
**Importance:** High

Dennis,

Attached to this email are two documents from the above reference organization:

- Formal resolution from the weed and pest board; and
- A letter from the weed and pest board to me, you, and numerous other people.

You may have the attached letter in your physical mailbox as you are one of the many people cc'd on the letter. **Please take note of the cc list.** It is the district's understanding that the contents of the letter are those of a specific board member, and that the board's intent was to help the district.

The formal resolution states that the board identifies and recognizes that there are in fact Black-tailed prairie dogs on the parcel(s) of the Thunder Basin National Grassland as reported by the 4W Ranch (Mr.

and Mrs. Harshbarger). The district received several formal resolutions last year from the 3 counties last year and responded with a formal letter to each resolution.

The weed and pest board specifically mailed the resolution separate from the letter.

I intend on responding to the resolution in the near future as has been the protocol in the past. I will keep the Supervisor's Office aware of when the letter is mailed.

I am requesting that the Supervisor's Office draft a response to the separate letter for my signature. It is inappropriate for the district to draft a response given the letter's contents, how this and related topics are being managed a great deal from the Regional Forester's office, and the people cc'd on the original letter.

Best,  
Shane

# **WESTON COUNTY WEED AND PEST CONTROL DISTRICT**

**P.O. BOX 411**

**NEWCASTLE, WY 82701**

**307 746-4555**

**SUPERVISOR  
HALE REDDING**

**OFFICE MANAGER  
DANA M. GORDON**

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

**DONLEY DARNELL JILL PISCHKE  
CLAY BRANSCOM GLENN MATER  
SCOTT SEWELL TROY LYNCH  
WAYNE CHRISTENSEN**

**July 19, 2017**

**Shane Walker-District Ranger**

**Douglas Ranger District**

**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grasslands**

**2250 East Richards Street**

**Douglas, WY 82633**

**Mr. Walker,**

The Weston County Weed and Pest Control District Board is very concerned with the infestation of Prairie Dogs on the Thunder Basin National Grasslands in Weston County. The population has increased dramatically over the last several years and is impacting the rangeland condition in Weston County. The infestation has not only affected the lands administered by your Agency but also the private and State lands that adjoin those lands.

The District Board has received several formal complaints the past two years about the Prairie Dog infestations on the Thunder Basin National Grasslands and has worked with you to resolve these issues. The District Board would like to see a more broad scale approach to the management and control of this State Designated Pest by the United States Forest Service, more specifically the Douglas Ranger District.

The District Board believes that there are avenues available to help control the population and bring it back down to a more manageable level in the existing plan, but also recommends that additional methods need to be utilized in order to achieve the goals of bringing these pests down to a manageable level.

The District Board would like to see more effort put into control around Residence's and other areas where Human Health and Safety are a concern. The District Board would like to see all available methods used to prevent any possible health risks to humans including the use of all EPA approved rodenticides in these areas not just Zinc Phosphide Oats. We understand that the current plan does not allow any other rodenticides at this time, however, we strongly urge you to make these options available in areas that could cause a Human Health and Safety issue. Anti-Coagulant rodenticides have been proven effective and are less likely to develop bait shyness with their use. These products allow for follow-up treatments during a single treatment season to further control efforts, whereas Zinc Phosphide Oats only allow for a single treatment each season. This creates a situation where success is more attainable in removing an infestation around residences.

# WESTON COUNTY WEED AND PEST CONTROL DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 411  
NEWCASTLE, WY 82701  
307 746-4555

## BOARD MEMBERS

DONLEY DARNELL JILL PISCHKE  
CLAY BRANSCOM GLENN MATER  
SCOTT SEWELL TROY LYNCH  
WAYNE CHRISTENSEN

SUPERVISOR  
HALE REDDING

OFFICE MANAGER  
DANA M. GORDON

The District Board would also like to see more effort be made at Density Control of infestations rather than Border Control. The Thunder Basin National Grasslands has far surpassed the goal of 18,000 acres of Prairie Dogs in Category 1 areas and controlling the boundary areas within this category.

The District Board also strongly encourages the Thunder Basin National Grasslands to allow the use of all control methods in these areas to allow for a more effective control effort in areas around residences and in areas of encroachment onto private land. These methods would include a broader spectrum of legal rodenticide use, including but not limited to Zinc Phosphide Oats, fumigants, and Anticoagulant baits, non-lethal methods are also encouraged after lethal methods are implemented to help discourage infestations in treated areas.

The District Board feels that with these efforts, along with cooperation and coordination with the Weed and Pest Control Districts and Private Landowners there will be fewer conflicts in the future.

Respectively



Donley Darnell  
Chairman  
Weston County Weed and Pest Control District



Hale M Redding  
District Supervisor  
Weston County Weed and Pest Control District

CC:

Dennis Jeager  
Brian Ferebee  
Thomas L Tidwell  
Sonny Perdue  
Senator Mike Enzi  
Senator John Barrasso  
Representative Liz Cheney  
Governor Matt Mead  
Doug Miyamoto  
Slade Franklin



WILLIAM W. HARRIS, JR.  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
2000 W. 10TH AVE.  
DENVER, CO 80202  
303.733.1111

RECEIVED

JUL 21 2017

DOUGLAS RANGER DISTRICT  
MEDICINE BOW-ROUTT NF'S

TO: [illegible]  
FROM: [illegible]  
SUBJECT: [illegible]  
[illegible text follows]

[illegible signature]

[illegible signature]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

Weston County Weed and Pest  
Control District  
PO Box 411  
Newcastle, WY 82701

CASPER WY 805

20 JUL 2017 PM 2 1



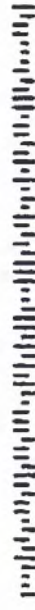
USDA—Forest Service  
Attn: Shane Walker  
2250 E. Richards  
Douglas, WY 82225

RECEIVED

JUL 21 2017

DOUGLAS RANGER DISTRICT  
MEDICINE BOW-ROUTT NF'S

82633\$8922



# **RESOLUTION June 21, 2017**

## **WESTON COUNTY WEED & PEST**

### **RESOLUTION RELATED TO INFESTATION ON UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE LANDS MEDICINE BOW – ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST –THUNDER BASIN NATIONAL GRASSLANDS**

**Whereas**, the Board of Directors of the Weston County Weed and Pest Control District has received formal complaint from 4W Family Limited Partnership and Robert and Jean Harshbarger, whose property lies within the district, against the United States Forest Service, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grasslands for infestation of the Black Tailed Prairie Dog, and

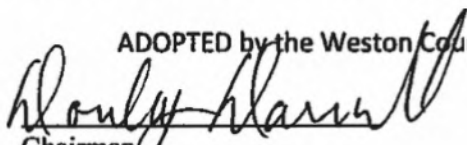
**Whereas**, the Wyoming Weed and Pest Control Act, W.S. 11-5-109 (a) allows for the district board to make an inspection of the suspected premises when probable cause indicates the existence of an infestation of weeds or pests that are liable to spread and contribute to the injury or detriment of others, and

**Whereas**, W.S. 11-5-109 (b), states if the suspected area is found to be infested, the district board, by resolution adopted by two-thirds (2/3) of its members, shall confirm such fact. The district board may set forth minimum remedial requirements for control of the infested area, and

**Whereas**, the District, through visual inspection of the subject property on May 15, 2017, finds that the lands administered by the United States Forest Service, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grasslands (USFS), that lay within *Township 41 N Range 67 W Sections 17,18,19,20,N1/2 of 29, and 30* are infested with Black Tailed Prairie Dogs.

**Therefore, Be it resolved that;** after reviewing the evidence of the infestation of the subject property as described herein, the Board does find that the property administered by the USFS is infested with Black Tailed Prairie Dogs with an affirmative vote of at least 2/3 of the members of the District Board, and that it is appropriate to serve this resolution upon USFS in accordance set forth in W.S.11-5-109.

ADOPTED by the Weston County Weed and Pest District Board this 21<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2017.

  
Chairman

  
Board Member

Attest:   
District Supervisor



THE STATE OF TEXAS  
COUNTY OF [illegible]

Know all men by these presents, that [illegible] of the County of [illegible] State of Texas, for and in consideration of the sum of [illegible] Dollars, to [illegible] in hand paid by [illegible], the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have granted, sold and conveyed, and by these presents do grant, sell and convey unto the said [illegible] of the County of [illegible] State of Texas, all that certain [illegible]

[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be the main body of a legal document, likely a deed or contract, containing several paragraphs of text.]

**RECEIVED**

**JUL 21 2017**

**DOUGLAS RANGER DISTRICT  
MEDICINE BOW-ROUTT PFS**



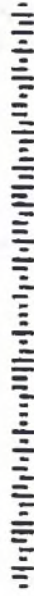
Weston County Weed and Pest  
Control District  
PO Box 411  
Newcastle, WY 82701



Shane Walker- District Ranger  
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest  
Thunder Basin National Grasslands  
2250 East Richards St  
Douglas, WY 82633



82633\$8922 H077



**From:** Lohr, Steve -FS  
**Sent:** 22 Aug 2017 17:40:41 +0000  
**To:** Baca, Valerie -FS; Kuiken, Jason J -FS  
**Cc:** Buchanan, Jacqueline A -FS  
**Subject:** RE: MBR pest letter  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-16-short form-draft-prairie-dog-letter\_jjk.docx

Valerie-

Attached is the letter. Didn't realize I was the limiting factor here. Jason formulated this response, which I concur with. Jacque has not read it to my knowledge but I am copying her here as well.

If Jacque has no issues, I think it is prime for your review. As written, the Secretary and Chief are cc'd so WO review will be necessary.

Thanks-



**Steve Lohr**  
**Director of Renewable Resources**

**Forest Service**  
**Rocky Mountain Region**

p: 303-275-5014

c: 303-242-7675

f: 303-275-5075

[slohr@fs.fed.us](mailto:slohr@fs.fed.us)

1617 Cole Boulevard, Building 17

Lakewood, CO 80401

[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)



**Caring for the land and serving people**

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**From:** Baca, Valerie -FS  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 22, 2017 11:15 AM  
**To:** Lohr, Steve -FS <slohr@fs.fed.us>; Kuiken, Jason J -FS <jkuiken@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** MBR pest letter

Hey Steve, Jason mentioned a pest letter being routed. Please keep me in the loop in needed for RFT clearance. Thanks



**Valerie Baca**  
**Director of External Affairs**

**Forest Service**  
**Rocky Mountain Regional Office**

p: 303-275-5118

c: 720-440-1072

f: 303-275-5366

[vbaca@fs.fed.us](mailto:vbaca@fs.fed.us)

1617 Cole Boulevard, Bldg 17

Golden, CO 80401

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/r2/>



Caring for the land and serving people

Dear Mr. Darnell and Mr. Redding,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding prairie dogs colonies on Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) and adjacent State and Private Lands. Since 1960, we have been working closely with our local partners including Weston County to manage the Thunder Basin National Grasslands (TBNG) in a manner that is favorable for multiple lands uses and helps sustain local economic activities. Now more than ever, the need to strengthen these partnerships is evident.

We acknowledge the concerns you identified regarding the recent increase in prairie dog colony expansions, how they affect rangelands and pose a threat to human health and safety. You also requested the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides (such as Rozol) and fumigants, in addition to the existing use of zinc phosphide oats, because they are more effective in removing colonies that cause a human health and safety risk around residences.

We acknowledge that prairie dog colonies have been exceeding our objectives in Category 1, 2, and 3 lands, with at least 43,000 acres on TBNG in 2016. To address this situation, in March of 2017 we temporarily rescinded the ban on shooting prairie dogs in the 3.63 management area. We also worked with the Thunder Basin and Inyan Kara grazing associations to identify and prioritize treatment areas for the potential application of zinc phosphide bait. Participating agreements to conduct control activities have been established and are being funded with over \$100,000 distributed to County Weed and Pest Districts to implement the activities.

I am requesting that proposed lethal control activities be discussed through a proposed new local collaborative sub-group made up of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA), a representative of the Wyoming Weed and Pest districts, and me as the local line officer for the U.S. Forest Service. This group would collaborate and share information regarding the location and extent of prairie dog control opportunities, discuss proposals regarding their consistency with the Management Strategy on TBNG, and consider objectives set forth by the TBGPEA and WGFD participants in their respective jurisdictions (adjacent State and private lands).

Regarding your request for the use of other forms of lethal control, the only rodenticide currently approved for use on prairie dog colonies on the TBNG is zinc phosphide. We will continue to coordinate with our Regional Office regarding the results of the 2015 Risk Assessment that was conducted for the use of Chlorophacinone (Rozol) on Forest Service lands, and the NEPA documentation and coordination with our state partners that would be needed prior to authorizing the use of additional rodenticides on the TBNG.

Considering the concerns that you have brought to our attention, our responsibility for human health and safety, and our 2015 Management Strategy to sustain prairie dog colonies, I am planning to introduce the following items for discussion and consideration at the next scheduled Thunder Basin Collaborative meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Items to Consider at Next Thunder Basin Collaborative Meeting (Scheduled September 7<sup>th</sup>) include:

1. Formulating small collaborative sub-group comprised of USFS Line Officer, WGFD, TBGPEA, and a Wyoming Weed and Pest Representative to share detailed information regarding prairie dog control opportunities.



2. Implementing lethal control on the TBNG and adjacent lands in high priority areas discussed by the aforementioned subgroup.

3. With the recent plague outbreak, coordinate with County to promote human health and safety.

I look forward to bringing these items to the larger Thunder Basin Collaborative scheduled on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and hope we can make mutual progress towards their implementation.

Respectfully,

Shane Walker

Cc List –

Brian Ferebee  
Thomas L Tidwell  
Sonny Perdue  
Senator Mike Enzi  
Senator John Barrasso  
Representative Liz Cheney  
Governor Matt Mead  
Doug Miyamoto  
Slade Franklin  
Defenders – Chamois  
TBGPEA – Dave Pelletz  
WYGF – Not sure who