

P.O. Box 128
Lee Vining, CA 93541
rockwren@att.net
June 7, 2018

Leeann Murphy
Acting District Ranger
Bridgeport Ranger District
HC 62 Box 1000
Bridgeport CA 93517

Letter sent via email: <comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-bridgeport@fs.fed.us>

RE. Bridgeport Southwest Rangeland Project

Dear Acting District Ranger Leann Murphy,

As a resident of the Mono Basin with a lifelong association with the High Sierra, I submit the following concerns and comments about the proposed conversion of the Dunderberg, Cameron Canyon, Summers Meadows, and Tamarack allotments to cattle grazing.

USFS had the foresight to cancel and not reauthorize sheep grazing permits on these allotments to protect the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep. A decision to select a no-grazing option on behalf of these magnificent public lands would be an inspired next step.

The four allotments contain diverse habitats, the headwaters of many streams, fragile high meadows and riparian ecosystems, a wide range of vegetation and wildlife. Places like these are getting more and more rare. Even with the proposed seasonal and head restrictions, cattle and infrastructure will degrade the land and habitat richness. A goal of the 1986 Toiyabe Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) is to bring 95% of the rangelands to satisfactory condition by 2030. How will introducing cattle to these mountain allotments meet LRMP goals, especially when they haven't in so many other allotments?

The proposal to add cattle grazing deserves an EIS rather than simply an EA. There are too many questions about what is at stake. For instance, what has changed since the termination of sheep grazing? What plant and animal species might return that haven't yet? Is there a possibility the Sierra Nevada Red Fox could move in if cattle were not present? What is the status of sage grouse on these allotments? Did their numbers increase since the sheep left? Will their numbers be monitored? An up-to-date biological survey is necessary as well as an analysis of the significance of these areas at a time when migration routes are constricting/diminishing and climate is changing. What are the impacts of cattle on these specific riparian and meadow systems, including water quality? How will the introduction of cattle not introduce Cheatgrass and other invasive plants?

The 1986 Toiyabe LRMP and the Record of Decision for the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) prioritizes the health of riparian, meadow, and aspen ecosystems over grazing. How will the proposed project fulfill this prioritization?

Healthy ecosystems and recreation are USFS goals (2004 SNFPA ROD}. Opening these areas to cattle will certainly affect recreation. Speaking for myself as a hiker, birder, backpacker, botanizer who loves Cattle Creek, Kavenaugh Ridge, and many other places within the

allotments, I know the presence of cattle would dramatically change the experience. It is likely I would not want to go to these places any longer. I am sure many others would feel the same. Cattle grazing—a single use—limits or precludes most other uses, not to mention the full flourishing of these wildlands.

These are very special places in the Sierra Nevada. All four allotments deserve the best of care and greatest consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Margaret Eissler