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Comments: Forest Plan Revision Comments. I have reviewed three documents included in the description of existing conditions. While all are quite informative there are several general comments I would like to have considered as the final documents are prepared. The documents reviewed were the Fire, Invasive Species and Livestock Grazing reports. First, the acreages of impacted lands, do not seem to correlate. For instance there is reported to be 3800 acres of transitory rangeland created by 'recent' wildfires removing the tree component but over 45% of the total Custer Gallatin forest has burned since 1988. Considering only the Ashland (72%) and Sioux districts (85%) it seems the 3800 acres of transitory rangeland is significantly understated. Resulting from loss of tree canopy is an increase in the grass component which also increases the AUM of grazing available. The grazing report indicates that there may be more grazing reductions in the burned areas. With the cost of wildfire control I would suggest that removal of the dry residue which carries fires in the late summer and fall a the FS should consider increasing grazing use to reduce fuel loads. There are several benefits to this - the economic value of the lands is increased and will benefit the county where the lands are located, the range improvement funds will receive more money from fees generated on AUM's, fire hazards will be reduced. This action can be achieved by lengthening the time the cattle are on the forest or by increasing the number of cattle during the existing timeframes of the permit. These are management decisions the FS should make with each permittee. Of course, the grazing utilization should not exceed the level of use that would impact the grazing landscape (riparian, upland). The grazing report concludes that the condition of the forest has been improving but further cuts in cattle are expected. This statement does not justify cuts if conditions are improving.

An important economic obligation of the FS is to balance economic contributions of grazing to the county with other uses that must be considered. The grazing report does not discuss this in any detail and the absence of the economic obligations is glaring in the grazing report. The FS is a significant land owner in the affected counties and has an obligation to contribute to the economy of the county.

The grazing report also refers to lands the CGFS manages in North Dakota. There are no Custer Gallatin Forest Service lands in ND.

The invasive species report attributes spread of noxious/invasive weeds to many sources. It is my opinion that cattle are a minor source of pathway as they travel to the forest from (adjacent) private lands once per year-in the spring when the seeds of the invasives are undeveloped and not viable. The cattle return off the forest to private lands in the late summer and fall when the seed sources are viable (and possibly increasing weeds on private lands). Wildlife travels across the private/forest boundaries indiscriminately spreading seeds as they travel. Additionally if cattle, which graze in a dispersed manner, are significant transporters of infestations there should be a more widespread affected area, not just those areas within 2000' of roads. The contributions by cattle seem to be overstated with no scientific support in the invasive report.

Several areas within the grazing report present existing conditions on lands that have been subjected to significant wildfires in 2012 and earlier years. The preparation of the forest plan is to be based on existing conditions. Areas that were burned over 4 years ago should be updated in the statements of existing conditions.

Your consideration of these comments and appropriate revisions within the reports is greatly appreciated. Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments. Jackie Musgrove