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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the "Proposal to Revise the Land Management Plan for the Ashley National Forest"

I think that the proposed plan is well thought out and relatively concise.

I have a couple of comments, listed below:

On page 27, there is a section called nonforest vegetation, but this term is not defined in the glossary. It might be helpful to give examples of the vegetation community types that fall within the category. There are desired conditions for Alpine, Desert Shrub, and sagebrush, but there is no mention of other vegetation types such as mountain brush, etc.

On page 27 under "nonforest vegetation," the desired condition states that "nonforest vegetation communities occur variably across the landscape and are controlled by inherent conditions such as geology, soil, aspect, annual precipitation, elevation." I agree with this statement. Areas of non-forest vegetation should be decided by nature, not created by man. The majority of the forest landscape should be trees, but in some areas because of geology, soil, aspect, precipitation, or elevation, trees cannot grow and so the forest manages these areas as nonforest vegetation. Yet two sentences later, you state "encroachment of conifer tree species in vulnerable communities is limited to 10 percent tree crown cover or less." I don't agree with this statement. If the geology, soil, aspect, annual precipitation, or elevation allows for trees to grow on the forest, they should be allowed to grow. I don't agree with the concept of conifer encroachment within the forest, it is an oxymoron. Trees "grow" in a forest, they don't "encroach." Please let nature decide where trees will grow. Please remove that whole sentence about encroachment of conifers.

On page 28, under "Sagebrush (FW-DC_NFS), I recommend adding that sagebrush communities "are controlled by inherent conditions such as geology, soil, aspect, annual precipitation, elevation." I think it is important that nature decides where sagebrush dominates the landscape.

On page 28, under "Objectives (FW-OB-NFV), I recommend emphasizing that restoring sagebrush communities means removing man's influence and meddling and allowing nature to thrive. I don't think that removing conifer trees to create sagebrush vegetation communities is generally appropriate. Vegetation community types should be determined by nature and not by man.

In general, the Ashley Management Plan should emphasize the need maintain the tree reserves on the forest. The emphasis should never be to remove trees in order to convert any areas to nonforest vegetation.

Temporary removal of trees for timber sales or to reduce fire danger is fine, because those activities encourage future growth of trees in those areas. But any proposal to remove trees in favor of nonforest vegetation is not appropriate for a forest plan. Let nature decide where trees will grow and where nonforest vegetation will grow. The forest service should be promoting as much tree growth as possible. It should not be removing trees to open up areas to increase sagebrush or livestock forage.

On page 32, under "Carbon Storage and Sequestration," I think there needs to be more emphasis on restoring and replanting trees on the Forest after massive wildfires. After the Mustang Fire in 2002, thousands of acres of pinyon and juniper trees were destroyed and are not growing back. The forest should have a goal of no net loss of carbon stocks or not net loss of acres of trees. It is essential that American Forests continue to provide carbon

storage and help generate oxygen and maintain watersheds. We are seeing devastating deforestation across the world, our National Forests should be an example of how we are preserving and encouraging tree growth and resilience.

Elsewhere in the document, there seems to be an emphasis on conifer removal in favor of sagebrush and rangelands. The emphasis in the forest plan should be to maintain almost all of the Ashley NF as forested lands. The Ashley NF was set aside as a forest reserve and it should still function primarily as a reserve to protect and encourage tree growth. The arbor foundation has a primary goal to plant trees. A forest reserve should have the goal to encourage tree growth to help the environment.

Recreation

I think that a desired condition should be that hiking trails are maintained annually, are in good condition, are well marked, and have sufficient signs so we know where we are. I also think the Forest Service should regularly have updated and accurate maps available for hikers, horseback riders, bikers, and ATV riders.