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First name: Aimee

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Chief Christiansen,

I am very sad to be writing this to you today. I recall writing a detailed report about the Black Footed Ferret in 4th grade, astounded by the beauty and uniqueness of this special animal, and now I am writing to you a little over four decades later to protect this animal now in trouble, in need of whatever small areas of protection we can offer it so its species may survive.

PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW CATTLE ON THIS LAND AND DO NOT ALLOW THE INCREASED KILLING OF PRAIRIE DOGS HERE!

Cattle are able to graze in so many parts of our public lands, why must they also be allowed to graze in this special place, The Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction Area of Thunder Basin National Grassland? And along with that grazing, how can you consider allowing the increased killing of prairie dogs?

The black-tailed prairie dog is a keystone species. Without prairie dogs, grassland ecosystems collapse, and numerous rare species, including burrowing owls, ferruginous hawks, swift foxes, and mountain plovers, begin to disappear. The Forest Service designated the Black-tailed prairie dogs a Sensitive Species offering it enhanced conservation by the Forest Service. Thanks to a systematic program of extermination by the livestock industry, these animals are down to only 0.01% of their historic range in Wyoming. The black-footed ferret, ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST ENDANGERED land mammals, absolutely requires active prairie dog towns for their habitat and as their food source!

Therefore:

- 1) Prairie dogs are a Sensitive Species that must not be poisoned or shot anywhere on Forest Service lands!
- 2) Prairie dogs - and Black Footed Ferrets - deserve protections over grazing by non-native livestock!
- 3) The Forest Service has no business killing or preventing prairie dogs from accessing their native habitats, either on or off National Grasslands!
- 4) If the livestock industry cannot coexist with native wildlife on the Thunder Basin, all livestock must be removed, and replaced with free-roaming bison.
- 5) Prairie dogs must be restored to their natural densities and historic range.
- 6) "Management" of prairie dogs should be limited to nonlethal translocation of prairie dogs to repopulated areas where their population densities are low, and a blanket authorization should be granted to dust for flea control in areas where fleas carry sylvatic plague, which decimates prairie dog populations.

The Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction Area must be fully restored and protected to support ferret reintroduction on the Thunder Basin.

Please do what the science requires! Please help us to protect what so many have been inspired by for our whole lives, these incredible public places and the wondrous species that were here long before cattle and humans and deserve to be here far more than either. It is to our benefit to know these ecosystems still survive, to enjoy knowing they are here, and to benefit for all they bring to our lives.

Let cattle roam on areas without these special creatures!

Thank you!