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Comments: Dear Forest Service,

A Prairie dog burrowing can be beneficial to the soil because mixing soil types and incorporating organic matter enhances soil formation. ... In addition to digging up the soil, prairie dogs clip the vegetation around their burrows, enhancing nitrogen uptake by these plants. Research finds the claims that prairie dogs are destructive to ranching are grossly overstated. Many ranchers do not exterminate the prairie dogs on their land and suffer no economic loss. ... The bottom line is that cattle ranchers should not fear prairie dogs living on or near grazing areas. Prairie dogs control sagebrush, mesquite, prickly pear and other weeds noxious to native ungulates and livestock. For example, studies show that prairie dogs consume mesquite, an invader that degrades the economic value of rangeland and makes round-ups difficult. Prairie dogs also eat grasshoppers, which benefits agriculture. Efforts to simply eradicate prairie dogs from urban areas are short-sighted and do not contribute to the conservation of our native grassland ecosystems. A model way to think about prairie restoration would be to utilize displaced urban prairie dog populations as a source to repopulate grassland areas being restored for prairie wildlife. In these restoration areas, animals can be released so they can repopulate areas where they were historically abundant, prior to mass extermination efforts and play their keystone role in grassland ecosystems, which is critical to maintaining grassland biodiversity.