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Comments: Hi, My preferred alternative is a mix of alternative 2 and 3. I am happy that the Forest Service has decided that black footed ferret reintroduction is impractical and not feasible due to the crashes of the prairie dog populations we have seen several times on thunder basin. Extreme population densities and acres consumed lead to the plague being prevalent and reoccurring. The densities that were seen before the last plague incident in 17/18 are horrible and devastating to the range land. Definitely mismanagement to start with and then nature taking over. Please get the target numbers of prairie dogs to a more manageable size. I realize that there will be some of the rodents always around but don't need more than 5000 acres.

My plan. Let's call it 2.4 Go to the 3.67 management area with less than 35000 acres and less than 10000 acres of prairie dogs. Have all the prairie dogs in 3.67 not grassland wide. Change some of the rules for those ranchers that have grazing permits in 3.67 and would bear the brunt of the prairie dogs. Those rules would help them still be able to graze their cattle in a healthy manner with the same numbers of AUM's that they have now or only a slight reduction in aum numbers due to the prairie dogs. Fencing, soil restoration projects (with cows and harvested forage), allowing wider time frame in usage of pasture would be a good place to start. Over 1000 active acres of prairie dog would allow recreational shooting (restricted in June), over 2500 acres would allow unrestricted recreational shooting and over 10000 acres would allow control by poison using zinc phosphide and fumigants. Population explosion of greater than 15000 acres would allow anti-coagulant poison to be used if allowed by other agencies. The prairie dog would be able to be controlled if encroaching within a one mile buffer around any non forest service lands in the 3.67 management area. Control would include shooting and poison options.

Outside of the 3.67 area prairie dogs could be controlled by recreational shooting and use of zinc phosphide and fumigants as poisons.

As to recreational shooting, it is only a tool to help control the population both in acres and in density in the towns themselves. That is one of the reasons the population went to 80,000 acres then plague and then only 200 acres. There was recreational shooting for a lot of years before the wild hair of ferret reintroduction, and the prairie dog was still on the grasslands, not in danger of going extinct, and expanding slowly more years than not. With any town of very large size (400 acres or more) shooting alone will not exterminate the town. There have been quite a few people try to do it and it didn't work.

In Closing, not having 80,000 acres of prairie dogs will help improve the health of the grasslands in these ways. Better soil that is less likely to erode, more uptake of rainfall for grasses and shrubs to use. More vegetation on the landscape for all grazers. Which will either add numbers of wildlife or more structure that is necessary for a lot of bird species including sage grouse. Better air quality thru less dust blowing and wind erosion and cleaner air with more plants helping convert co2 to oxygen and also sequester carbon in the soil.

My ranking of alternative plans if its one over the other and not a combined 2 and 3 would be the planned alternative 2 then 3 as second. Both 1 and 4 will lead to a big disaster and the plague again.