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Comments: in conflict with the Forest Service's legal obligation to conserve grassland ecosystems and the imperiled wildlife that depend on them. While shooting and poisoning of prairie dogs is already permitted on the rest of Thunder Basin National Grassland, the proposed alternatives will remove many restrictions on these activities within the 10 percent of the grassland set aside primarily for the recovery of black-footed ferrets and the benefit of wildlife.

"Black-footed ferrets are nearing extinction due, in large part, to the 97% loss of prairie dogs across the Great Plains," says Dr. Brian Miller, a retired wildlife biologist who worked on black-footed ferret recovery for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Smithsonian Institution Conservation and Research Center, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Few places exist with sufficient prairie dog numbers to support a self-sustaining population of ferrets. Thunder Basin is one of those rare places. None of the U.S. Forest Service's amendment alternatives provide a sound scientific basis for recovering black-footed ferrets."