

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/1/2020 10:00:00 AM

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Comments: Please accept these comments regarding the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland DEIS.

I oppose removing prairie dog protections from the current management plan. All proposed alternatives will allow poisoning and shooting prairie dogs within the current protected zone.

The Forest Service has a legal obligation to conserve grassland ecosystems and wildlife that depend on them. Shooting and poisoning prairie dogs is permitted on the rest of Thunder Basin National Grassland. The proposed alternatives will remove restrictions in the 10% of the grassland set aside primarily for the recovery of black-footed ferrets. The management goal of 18,000 acres of prairie dog colonies represents 3% of the national grassland. Many species require intact prairie dog colonies: mountain plover, ferruginous hawks, burrowing owls, swift fox, and the endangered black-footed ferret.

97% percent of black-tailed prairie dogs have been lost across their historic range. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified Thunder Basin National Grassland as possibly the best existing site to re-introduce ferrets across the ferret's range. If the prairie dogs are killed and their colonies are removed, it is likely the black-footed ferrets will never be recovered or removed from the Endangered Species List.

We have so little wilderness left. Please prioritizes preserving native species habitat on these public lands over ranching interests.