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Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

What I find most disturbing about the first proposed changes to the livestock grazing plan in thirty years is how anachronistic it is and how lazily it appears to have been done.

The proposal completely ignores how our publicly-owned forests are rapidly increasingly becoming more prone to extreme fire events. Cattle are grazers and selectively eat grasses promoting uncontested growth of shrubs that provide explosive ladder fuels. Cattle, particularly in the increased numbers proposed, will consume significant amounts of fresh water that the forest desperately needs, now more than ever, to remain healthy. Cattle will also quickly befoul the water as it becomes more scarce - I know this from countless experiences in New Mexico where springs, even in the wilderness, smell like feed lots. Even with the best water filters, I dare not drink this water.

As global warming continues to accelerate, the conditions that we are enduring in New Mexico will spread throughout the American West.

What makes this worse is the fact that public lands grazing is benefiting private industry rather than the public. The owners of these cattle are making profits while degrading the land to the point that large portions of OUR public lands are inaccessible and unpleasant. The few areas that have sufficient water to overcome the habits of an out of place wetland species are completely overrun by cattle because, I suppose, it isn't completely ruined YET. For instance, I was in the Midnight Meadows area in northern New Mexico last summer surrounded by aggressive bulls fighting over cows - from before dawn to well after dark. My hiking opportunities were limited to a very small area to avoid them. Sadly, even those areas were difficult to traverse without soiling my shoes in their abundant droppings. I am not alone in this experience: <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-feral-bulls-20180302-story.html>

Please recall that public lands grazing is not a right. The courts, including the Supreme Court, have REPEATEDLY affirmed this fact. Public lands are meant for the benefit of all citizens - not a select few business owners.

This so-called plan completely ignores science and should not be built on top of the previous outdated and utterly failed plan preceding it. Instead, a new plan should be built to match the environmental, economic, and social needs of our current society. This plan should focus on:

- * Mitigating the effects of global warming including fire danger and fresh-water availability both in the forests and in downstream communities. This is particularly important as water scarcity becomes more prominent

- * Expanding the availability of public lands to the citizens who own it rather than exclusive use by private industries. This includes

- o Positive experiences rather than aggressive livestock and befouled landscapes
- o Hiking opportunities
- o Backpacking and camping opportunities through ALL of our forests not those that can no longer support cattle or those that can and therefore are overrun by them
- o Abundant and diverse wildlife
- o Hunting and fishing opportunities

- * Extricating the agency from its existing economic relationships so that this abrupt change does not destroy the lives of the people who currently take advantage of public lands grazing. This program could be modeled after previous proposals such as the "H.R.3337 - Arizona Voluntary Grazing Permit Buyout Act of 2003"

(<https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/house-bill/3337/text>).

o Note: The primary complaints against this plan were based upon claims that a (tiny) group of individuals would lose their way of life. Please recall that this group obtained this privilege, more frequently than not, based upon land-grant programs that specifically excluded people of particular racial origins. This select group continues to gain all of the benefits of our public lands at below market prices (as measured against State programs). This "way of life" argument no longer holds any merit in today's more equitable society.

I will leave you with a reminder that the Forest Service must fully comply with the Executive Orders and policies of the Biden Administration to "combat the climate crisis to implement a Government-wide approach that reduces climate pollution in every sector of the economy; increases resilience to the impacts of climate change; protects public health; conserves our lands, waters, and biodiversity..." Your existing plan most certainly does not. I sincerely hope you will do the right thing and modernize your agency.

Thank you,
Roderick Flores
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