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Comments: Millions of Acres of Our Public Lands at Stake!

Our family is speaking up for "Wilderness" in "National Forests", which would be impacted by, substantial, changes the "Forest Service" ("FS") is proposing for its livestock grazing program! The agency's "Rangeland Management Directives" that have the potential to affect millions of acres of public land, including "Wilderness"!

The "FS"'s proposed new rules (released in the waning days of the Trump administration) have, huge, implications for wildlife, and, "Wilderness" on millions of acres of our public lands!

Incredibly, domestic cattle and, sheep, are, currently, authorized to graze about 8 million acres of "National Forest Wilderness" in the lower 48 states, mostly, in, critical, watersheds, particularly, unsuited to grazing! Over 2.5 million acres of that total is within vacant (unused, and, unallocated) allotments. And, while the, original, authors, and, supporters, of the "Wilderness Act of 1964" wanted to end grazing in "Wilderness" because grazing is, fundamentally, at odds with "Wilderness", the politics, at the time, would not allow it. Today, the, negative, impacts of livestock grazing are much more, clearly, understood, including degraded water quality, and, soils, the spread of, invasive, weeds, destruction of riparian, and, other important habitats, reduced forage for, and, displacement of, native wildlife, and, much more.

The "FS"'s proposed revisions would expand grazing across our "National Forests" and, within "Wilderness" by directing, vacant, allotments to be, fully, restocked, and, by returning grazing to the, excessive, levels permitted in the 1960's, despite conditions that cannot support increased grazing! This is the, opposite, direction that the "FS" should take-instead of increasing livestock grazing on public lands, the agency should allow, vacant, allotments to be permanently, closed, and, should protect "Wilderness", other public lands, and, wildlife, by limiting, rather than increasing, inappropriate, livestock grazing in our "National Forests".

This, leftover, Trump administration proposal poses other problems as well. It fails to hold livestock grazers accountable by not setting, proper, standards to, adequately, monitor conditions on the ground, and, it excludes the public from some grazing decision processes. If all this were not bad enough, increased grazing would, not only, fuel livestock grazing's contribution to the climate, and, biodiversity, crises, but, run, directly, counter to the Biden Administration's 30x30 land conservation agenda by sacrificing what could be, protected, lands to the commercial livestock industry!

Our entire family is, strongly, urging the "Forest Service" to do the right, ethical thing to do for "Wilderness", other public lands, and, wildlife, by dropping its proposed "Rangeland Management Directives"!

The "Rangeland Management Directives" have the potential to, significantly, affect millions of acres of public land, including "Wilderness", where livestock grazing is, fundamentally, at odds with the mandate of the "Wilderness Act" that "Wilderness" remain "untrammeled."

Livestock grazing on "National Forests", including millions of acres of "Wilderness", significantly, degrades our public lands. Impacts from grazing must be, fully, examined, and, addressed through a transparent, public process that complies with Federal laws, including the "National Environmental Policy Act".

Any revisions to "Forest Service" grazing policies should encourage, and, prioritize, voluntary grazing permit retirement to reduce permitted livestock grazing across the "National Forest" system, including within "Wilderness", so as to protect "Wilderness", other public lands, and, wildlife.

The "FS" should NOT return grazing to the, excessive, levels permitted in the 1960's when it is clear conditions' oftentimes' cannot support increased, or' even' current, grazing levels.

The "Forest Service" MUST develop policies that ensure the agency will maintain authority for grazing management decisions, and, hold grazing permittees accountable for the impacts their livestock has on public lands!

The recovery of imperiled, or, threatened, species needs to be prioritized on "National Forests", and, livestock grazing managed so as not to jeopardize species' recovery!

The "Forest Service" must do the right thing for "Wilderness", other public lands, and, wildlife by dropping your proposed "Rangeland Management Directives".

If the "Forest Service" wishes to amend its directives, the "Forest Service must undertake a more comprehensive rulemaking process that complies with the "National Environmental Policy Act".