

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/16/2021 7:18:19 PM

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Comments: I am writing to protest and oppose the Forest Service's proposed Rangeland Management Directives. This rule was proposed in the last days of the Trump administration and is consistent with its wholesale devotion to private profit over public and environmental wellbeing.

Currently animals are authorized to graze on approximately 8 million acres of National Forest Wilderness in the lower 48 states, mostly in critical watersheds particularly unsuited to grazing. This is already problematical and antithetical to conservation of land, habitat, and biodiversity. Our public lands system has, in my opinion, always considered the interests of ranchers over the welfare of the wilderness land and the wildlife that lives thereon. Ranchers can go elsewhere. Wildlife cannot be relocated to a "more convenient place" to allow ranchers to graze domesticated, non-native animals. As our lands and existence of wildlife are challenged by habitat loss, climate change, and excessive human activity, we need to change the way our public lands are managed. That means more protection for wilderness and wildlife, not less. The proposed changes are anathema to that necessity.

Grazing in Wilderness is fundamentally at odds with the definition of Wilderness, which mandates that Wilderness remain untrammelled. The negative impacts of livestock grazing are well understood, resulting in a degraded environment: 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. Native wildlife MUST be respected, as protecting biodiversity is key to a sustainable environment. No private for-profit entity should be more important than the wildlife that rightfully inhabits any area.

Planning to 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 1960s, despite conditions that cannot support increased grazing is an irresponsible and retrograde strategy. It is obvious that ranchers are once again flexing their muscles, and putting pressure on their political representatives to tweak policy to their advantage and for their personal profit. This must not be allowed. Ranchers have pushed policy to the enormous detriment of wilderness and wildlife for decades, consistently apply the thin edge of the wedge to promote their interests. Their voice must not be allowed to be more important than the needs of wildlife residing on public lands nor than the conservation of the resources of soil and water.

The proposed rule change not only seeks to allow expanded grazing, but it also fails to hold livestock grazers accountable for the damage they will cause by not setting proper standards to adequately monitor conditions on the ground. It excludes the public from some grazing decision processes, which is outrageous considering that every American is an equal stakeholder, and there will be individuals or collectives directly affected by grazing decisions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly considering the dire situation we face, this change would directly fuel livestock grazing's contribution to the climate and biodiversity crises. It also is in direct opposition to the Biden Administration's 30x30 land conservation agenda by sacrificing what could be protected lands to the commercial livestock industry.

As a stakeholder in our public lands I resent the prioritization of private entities that profit from being able to use our collective public lands, especially in ways contrary to the definition of Wilderness. The Forest Service needs to change its paradigm.