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First name: Lisa
Last name: Nerio
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear Forest Service Managers:

Who wants more drought? I dont! I dont!
Who wants Global Warming? I dont! I dont!
Who wants lots of grazing permits? I dont! I dont!

The current Manti LaSal forest management plan is over 35 years old and is up for review and revision. We are now in the depths of climate change with the west experiencing extreme widespread drought. Thirty-five years ago climate was normal with ample precipitation. Thirty-five years ago Utahs population was only 1.6 million people. Utahs 2021 population is now more than double at 3.3 million. That means far, far more people are visiting the mountains creating overuse, litter, trail degradation, flora and fauna disturbance. What worked 35 years ago is no longer viable.

The following items Id love to see incorporated into the revised plan:
1) Reduced grazing permits
2) Retain Pinyon/Juniper forests for the Pinyon Jays
3) Removal of alpine goats
4) Preservation and protection of Cultural Areas
5) Creation of additional Research Natural Areas (RNAs)

1) REDUCED GRAZING PERMITS
Please REDUCE the number of grazing permits/allotments significantly from the current 90%. As we all know, cattle fart producing methane which captures carbon creating the greenhouse effect and causing Global Warming and consequently drought and reduced forage per acre. Ranchers are then forced to become increasingly creative (moving grazing areas, feeding alternative forage, buying feed etc) to feed their cattle. To continue grazing allotments at 90% is like giving someone an extra noose to hang themselves with. Its a losing battle as ranchers throughout are reducing their herd size and many are even foregoing ranching altogether.

Another reason to minimize grazing permits is because cattle are non-native. They are from EUROPE. They especially do not belong in the arid west because they need too many acres per head compared to the humid southeast with more abundant forage per acre. Cattle browse aspen shoots preventing new aspen trees. They pollute and damage waterways. They disturb the soil promoting invasives, especially cheatgrass which we all know grows, spreads and dries out rapidly creating quick fuel for wildfires. All that and they crowd out deer and elk.

2) RETAIN PINYON/JUNIPER FORESTS FOR THE PINYON JAYS
Pinyon pines and juniper are the predominant native trees in the 5000 - 7000 elevation. Please abolish the practice of chaining to remove the pinyon pine and juniper trees. This practice is done to reduce fuel for wildfires and to clear the land to create grasslands for the cattle. But its an oxymoron because cattle lead to cheatgrass and more wildfires. Pinyon jays who habitate in PJ forests eat primarily pinyon pine seeds but they also eat large numbers of insects. How many insects do cows eat? They create more insects! Again, cattle are misplaced in the arid west. Pinyon Jay numbers are down by 85% since 1971 as PJ forests have been razed. Pinyon Jays are listed as vulnerable by te International Union for the Conservation of Nature and have been lisated by threatened by many other conservation organizations. Please keep intact the PJ forests to avoid a chain reaction of species going endangered.

3) REMOVAL OF ALPINE GOATS
Goats were introduced to the LaSals so the BLM could profit from sales of goat hunting permits. They are NONnative. There are no native goats in the LaSals for that matter and are severely compromising the fragile alpine environment. They eat and trample fragile unique plants of the LaSal (LaSal daisy and LaSal groundsel) that take decades to grow in the harsh tundra conditions at 11,000 elevation and create wallows which accelerate erosion. I have volunteered with the Grand Canyon Trust twice documenting the impact of the goats and have seen first hand their damage. Please disallow them and have them removed. To retain them is to forever destroy the land. Goats in the LaSals are simply wrong.

4) PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL AREAS
Please respect ancestral sites and artifacts by protecting them from vandals and thieves. No one wants their ancestors gravesites run over by ATVs nor spray painted with graffiti nor pilfered for profit. They are treasure troves of archaeological artifacts and are held sacred by native peoples.

5) CREATION OF ADDITIONAL RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS (RNAs)
Research Natural Areas are crucial because their isolation from human interference retains their many secrets for the benefit of research and preserving original genetic material. Think of how virtually all corn has been hybridized. Fortunately a few untainted seeds have been spared and preserved. And think of the Amazon and how medicinal plants are STILL being discovered. Every scientific experiment has a control where a sample has no protocol applied to it. RNAs serve as the controls. With the virus and the increased population working from home and greatly increased visitation to the Manti LaSal unfortunately too many visitors are disrespectful and trample the earth. Areas need to be protected and preserved. More areas need to be designated as RNAs. Its like having an ace up your sleeve for research. Please designate as RNAs: Left Fork of Huntington Canyon (I have removed invasives from there and it is pristine and beautiful!), Andy Mesa Red Tower - it has legacy, 500yr old trees (Ive been there, also beautiful!), Sinbad Ridge and Heliotrop Botanical. Thank you!

The primary reason to keep wild places wild is not for human pleasure or consumption but for the survival of the many other species whose lives depend on those wild places.

I have been visiting south central Utah since 1977 when I attended summer camp near Capitol Reef. As an adult I have done extensive volunteer work and regularly visit to recreate. My hope is to see the Manti LaSal respected and preserved.

Please seriously consider the Conservation Alternative. Please be a leader and role model for all of Utah and all of the Forest Service by noticeably conserving and preserving the land for future generations.

Sincerely,
Lisa Nerio