

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/17/2025 6:00:00 AM

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Comments: Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins

Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture

1400 Independence Ave., S.W.

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Sept 17, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in regards to the 2024 Cimarron & Comanche Grasslands Management Revision Plan,

I am very concerned that stakeholders were not contacted regarding the process for participation including but not limited to grazing permittees, US Congressman Jeff Hurd of CD3, Colorado Senator Rod Pelton of SD35, Colorado Representative Ty Winter of HD47, and the county commissioners of southeast Colorado. Grazing permittee information is available to the US Forest Service. The elected representatives have public contact information. The impression I am left with is that the Forest Service does not want input from the people that live on the land or are affected by the decisions made regarding the management decisions of this land.

A packed room of concerned ranchers was able to ask questions at last night's add on to the schedule "Zoom" type meeting, only due to last minute outreach by a handful of concerned people that made calls after learning about the ongoing assessment. This revision process has been going on for months and none of us were aware of any of it. This is not how trust and respectful collaboration work. The 1500 page "plan" we have an opportunity to provide comment on has a deadline of September 25, 2025 -eight days from now. I would like to hear directly from Secretary Rollins' staff as to the process for conducting management plan revisions regarding outreach to affected communities.

Chief of the Forest Service, Tom Schults, said in his introduction on March 4, 2025, available on the [www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov) website, "You've heard of the golden rule. I believe in what is known as the platinum rule: Treat others as they want to be treated. To do that, you have to get to know people and build trust. One way to do that is by soliciting feedback from those who use our public lands, from tribes, states, recreationists, industry, sportsmen, ranchers and the mining community."

I think this process, that I have been suddenly surprised by, does not meet his standards.

My concerns today regarding the revision process so far include:

1. Which specialists "rapidly evaluate existing ecological, social and economic conditions and trends"? I would like a list of specialists and the employer of each.
2. Why do said specialists need to "help articulate the need to change the plan" if say the land is virtually unchanged since 1984 when the current plan was created? The population of the area has declined. Tourism is not high. Traffic is likely decreasing. Does the plan require change?
3. I would like an explanation of the process of determining species of concern in this region within this revision plan.
4. I want the process of determining "wilderness characteristics" explained and the consequences should that definition be met. Who makes that final determination?
5. I do not understand how the Purgatoire River, which does not flow consistently, could meet the definition of a "Wild and Scenic River"? I want an explanation for the consequences of redesignating this river should the plan attempt to move forward with this redesignation. Who makes the final decision on redesignation?
6. The shrinking population of this region of Colorado still contributes enormously to Colorado's economy with a leading economic driver being beef production. The supporting industries of hay and feed production, salebarns, and small towns that are part of the economics of the region all rely on ranching. Ranchers have coexisted with other industries and land uses like hunting, mining, and recreation for many years. Food production is a national security issue and it should be protected across all 50 states. It is very concerning to me that this revised plan may prioritize recreation and/or conservation over grazing. The lands are to be shared.
7. The stated goal for the 443,784 acre Comanche National Grassland which was created in 1960, is "to conserve and use the natural resources of grass, water and wildlife habitat and to protect prehistoric and historic areas." Has that mission statement changed?
8. I am uncertain as to whether the NEPA guidelines/process have been followed.
9. I am concerned that the organization hired to compile this "plan", AECOM, will not prepare a fair and balanced document that reflects the input of all those that use public lands.

We must coexist. I am opposed to changing the mission statement or the current accepted use of the lands in the proposed revision plan.

My hope is that The Cimaron and Comanche National Grasslands' land management plan revision team takes this opportunity to gain some trust by openly sharing information so that everyone has a seat at the table.

Trish Leone