



United States Department of Agriculture

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News Release

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Rifle Ranger District seeks public feedback on Rifle Creek grazing allotment draft Environmental Assessment

Rifle, Colo. – April 27, 2017 - The White River National Forest is seeking comments on a draft Environmental Assessment to reissue term grazing permits on the Rifle Creek Grazing Allotment under an adaptive management strategy.

The Rifle Creek Grazing Allotment is located in the northern portion of the Rifle Ranger District above Rifle Gap State Park, on Forest Service Road 832. The allotment covers approximately 17,000 acres and the current permit authorizes approximately 850 cow-calf pairs. The grazing season runs from June to October and permits are reissued every 10 years.

The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether to continue livestock grazing on all, none, or some portion of the Rifle Creek Grazing Allotment and determine if the forage provided for grazing would be consistent with the White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The Forest Service provides for multiple uses where appropriate, and one of those uses is livestock grazing. Grazing on National Forest System land contributes to the sustainability of permittee's grazing operations, the local economy and is a source of income for many families in the Rifle community.

"We are interested in hearing from the public about continued grazing in this area as we work through the analysis," stated Sarah Hankens, Rifle District Ranger. "Public comment and the analysis process will be very useful as we consider how the adaptive management strategy would allow us to be more responsive to balancing grazing operations with other forest resource management activities."

The analysis area contains lands identified as available for domestic livestock grazing. Multiple needs have been identified within the project area including a need to analyze possible effects of continuing or modifying the grazing authorization. There is also a need for greater management flexibility to adapt with fluctuations in environmental and social conditions.

The proposed action contains a monitoring plan that would determine if actions are being implemented as planned and if the desired results are being attained. Based on monitoring findings, livestock grazing management may be adjusted within specified parameters described in the Environmental Analysis and the Decision Notice.

How to Comment and Timeframe

Specific written comments on the proposal will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of the legal notice in the Rifle Citizen Telegram. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the sole means for calculating the start of the comment period. The end of the comment period is expected to be May 29, 2017.

Written comments must be addressed to: Sarah Hankens, Rifle District Ranger, c/o Lydia LaBelle de Rios, 0094 CR 244 Rifle, CO 81650; FAX: (970) 625-2532. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) or to labelederios@fs.fed.us. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Persons commenting should include: 1) name, address, telephone number and organization represented, if any; 2) title of this project and 3) specific facts and supporting reasons for us to consider.

For more information visit the project webpage here:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=47452>

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments will have eligibility to file an objection under §218.8. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements in §218.25(a)(3). Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

To request additional information regarding this proposal, contact Lydia LaBelle de Rios at (970) 625-6859 or Joe Fazzi at (970) 625-6847.