

SCOPING STATEMENT

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN THE SPRING CREEK ANALYSIS AREA

Proposed Action:

The Douglas Ranger District is proposing to update Allotment Management Plans (AMP's). The AMP's direct the management of rangeland resources, including the management of livestock grazing, on the National Forest System lands (NFS) in the Spring Creek Analysis Area (further referred to as SCAA). An Environmental Assessment (EA) of the effects of the proposal will be completed as a result of this process. The EA will lead to a Range Allotment Management Plan (RAMP), which in one document will address each allotment within the SCAA. The analysis area includes Jenkins #101, Boardman #102, Brown #103, Dickinson #105, Gleason #106, Harris #107, Heald #109, Brown-Kennedy #111, McManamen #112, Norfolk #113, Pickrel #114, Snyder #115, Turnquist #116, Wenande #117 and York #118 allotments. The SCAA is located on the Thunder Basin National Grassland, approximately 35 miles north of Gillette, Wyoming in Campbell County Wyoming (R.68-71W. T53-56N, See attached map).

This analysis area was extensively evaluated during the Spring Creek Assessment, which was a broad scale look at the SCAA completed in September 2002. This assessment involved the work of an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and many months of fieldwork, meetings and analysis. The EA will use the Spring Creek Assessment report as a tool and as the source document for information about existing and desired condition in the analysis area.

All allotments within the analysis area have been monitored and evaluated intermittently in the past and each of the years 2000-2003. Rangeland Management Specialists did the monitoring in 2000 and 2001, while the monitoring in 2002-2003 was done by with range, hydrology, fisheries, and wildlife personnel. Even though drought conditions existed throughout the year 2002, the rangeland vegetation continues to meet Grassland Plan desired conditions.

The proposal for the allotments within the Analysis Area is to continue to be managed under current grazing systems to maintain desired conditions. This proposal will be documented in a RAMP for the 15 allotments within the Spring Creek Grazing Association. The proposed action to continue livestock grazing will be accomplished through livestock management techniques using a variety of adaptive management strategies. Adaptive management allows us to monitor resource conditions and make changes in the way resources are managed as monitoring indicates in order to meet the desired resource conditions that are consistent with the Grassland Plan's goals, objectives, standards, guidelines and monitoring requirements.

The Pickrel Allotment is currently involved in a proposed land exchange (LEX). The vegetative condition is acceptable and management will be continued, "as is" until the LEX is completed. At that time the Allotment Management Plan will be re-analyzed.

Results of the analysis may result in permit modification(s), which will be documented in the RAMP.

Purpose and Need for the Project:

The purpose of this project is to determine whether to continue to authorize livestock grazing, and if so, how would this activity be implemented.

The goal of the RAMP is to manage future livestock grazing in a way that is consistent with documented improved resource conditions and changing resource uses. This management must be consistent with the Grassland Plan objectives for moving the analysis area toward its desired future condition, as described in the 2001 Thunder Basin Land and Resource Management Plan. The goal is to get all AMPs in the SCAA on to the same schedule for analysis decision and implementation.

Project Area Description:

The Spring Creek Analysis Area includes approximately 95,079 total acres, including 48,740 acres of National Forest land, and 46,339 acres of private, State of Wyoming, and BLM land. Approximately 99 percent, or 48,253 National Forest Service (NFS) acres, are considered capable for livestock grazing. The acres identified as unsuitable for livestock grazing are mostly due to steep slopes. The vegetation communities include big sagebrush/western wheatgrass, and ponderosa pine community types.

The NFS lands in the SCAA are now being managed according to the Grassland Plan goals in designated areas with similar management emphasis. Approximately 25%, or 12,332 acres, are being managed for Rangelands with Diverse Natural-appearing Landscapes (Management Area 3.65). Approximately 4%, or 1,929 acres, are being managed for Dispersed Recreation High Use (Management Area 4.32). Approximately 71%, or 34,481 acres, are being managed for General Forest and Rangeland: Range Vegetation Emphasis (Management Area 5.12). Approximately 25%, or 12,332 acres, are in the Duck Creek Inventoried Roadless Area, which takes in the entire 3.65 Management Area.

Analyses conducted during 2001, 2002, and 2003 indicated that the forage conditions were good to excellent across most of the Analysis Area, with a stable to upward trend. Forage utilization indicated that stocking is at an appropriate level under the current management system. Cattle and sheep, in accordance with term livestock grazing administered jointly by the Forest Service and the Spring Creek Grazing Association, are currently grazing the allotments. Each allotment is being managed under a deferred rotation grazing systems where National Grassland in pastures grazed in any part of May one year may not be grazed in May the following year.

Decisions to be made:

1. Whether to continue to permit livestock grazing on the allotments within the Spring Creek Analysis Area.
2. What range improvements and monitoring programs will be implemented within the Spring Creek Analysis Area.

Request for comments

Scoping to identify issues and concerns is an important part of the environmental analysis process (40 CFR 1501.7). You are encouraged to take the time to consider the proposed updating of Allotment Management Plans for the Spring Creek Analysis Area as described elsewhere in this scoping document and submit your comments on this proposal to the Douglas District Ranger.

In order to identify the issues, complete the analysis, and arrive at a decision that best meets the public interest, your comments are needed and encouraged. The IDT needs to know what issues, concerns, or other comments you have in relation to this proposal. This may be the public's only opportunity to comment.

Written comments may be submitted to the District Ranger, Douglas Ranger District, 2250 E. Richards, Douglas, Wyoming 82633, Attention: Kurt Staton, Rangeland Management Specialist. Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, faxed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the 30th calendar day following publication of the Legal Notice of this proposed action in the Casper Star-Tribune. E-mail comments should be sent to: **comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-routt-douglas-thunder-basin@fs.fed.us**. If comments are electronically mailed the sender should receive and automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive such confirmation it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. Comments may be hand delivered to the Douglas Ranger District office between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. A copy of the scoping statement as well as maps for the area can be found on the Forest Service website at www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/projects/range.

During this 30-day public comment period only those persons who submit timely and substantive comments with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision will be accepted as appellants (36 CFR 215.13). In order to secure appeal eligibility, and individual or representative of an organization submitting comments must either sign the comments document or verify their identity upon request. For more than one name or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided by the individual authorized to represent the organization, or by each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility. Individual members of an organization must submit their own substantive comments in order to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual. Comments received on behalf of an organization shall be considered as those of the organization only.

This letter and request for comments has also been mailed to other Federal, State, and local agencies, adjacent landowners, and individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by this project.

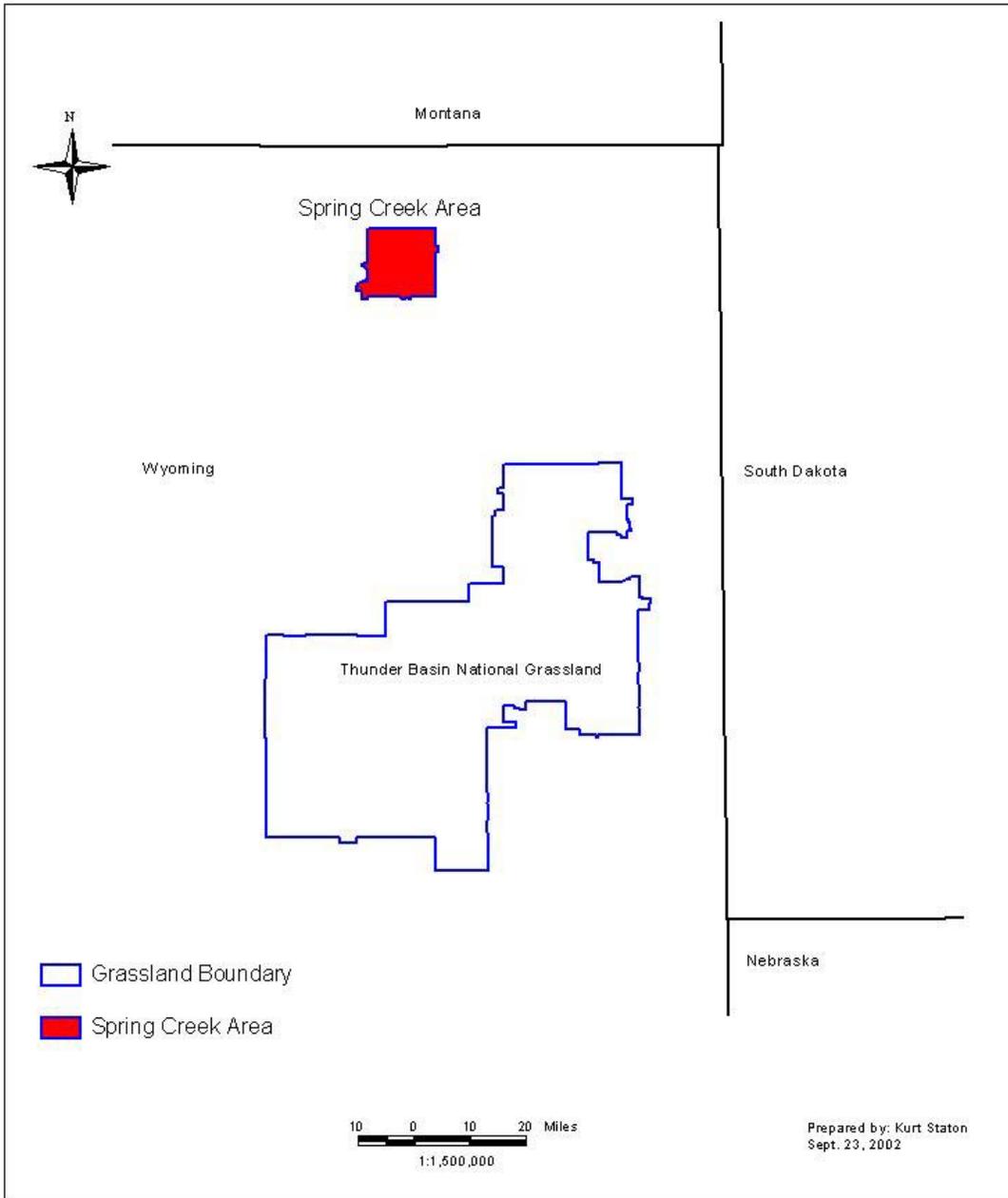
Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request that the agency withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited

circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with name and address within 10 days. For additional information, contact Kurt Staton, Rangeland Management Specialist, at (307) 358-4690.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

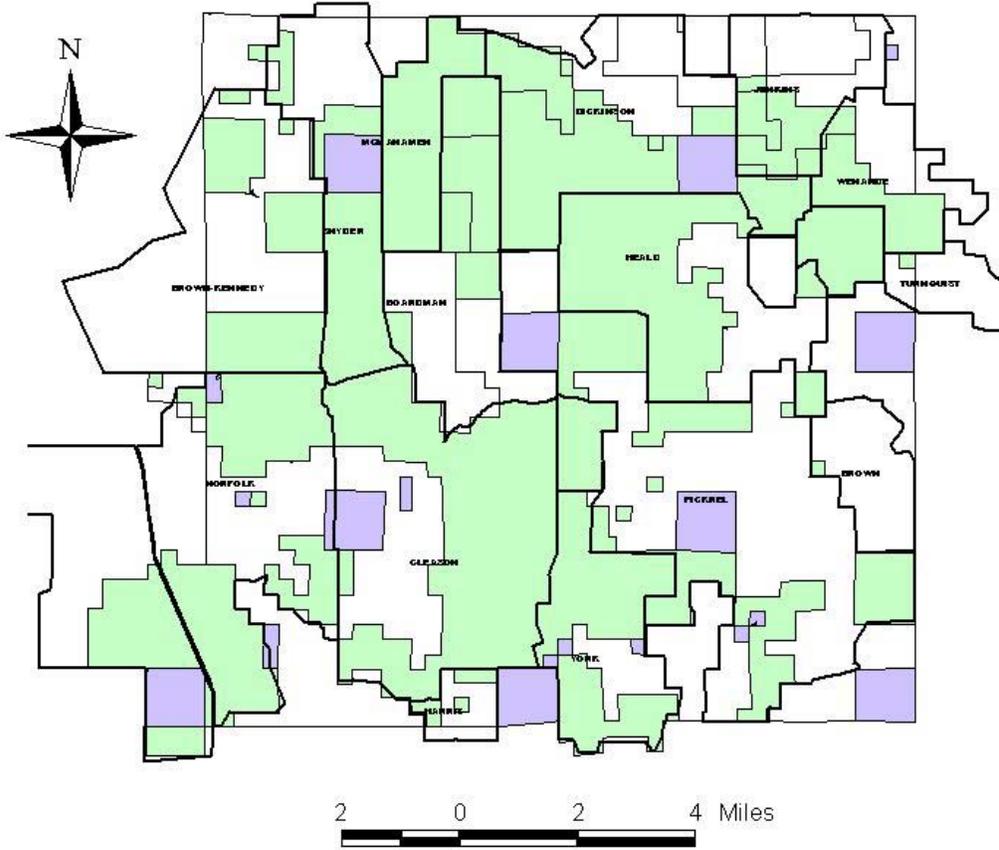
General Area Map



Analysis Area Map



Spring Creek Analysis Area



- Allotment
- Status
- NF
- NON-NF_PVT
- NON-NF_STATE

The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. Data is the product of various sources. They may be developed from aerial photography, ground surveys, or other data. Users should be aware of the potential for errors in data collection, processing, and analysis. The Forest Service makes no warranty, express or implied, for the use of this data for purposes not intended by the Forest Service. For more information, contact: Mark R. Brown, R.F. 1, Box 1000, State St., N. 2nd Floor, Salem, Oregon 97331, 503-553-2217