

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REGIONAL FORESTER ANNOUNCES REVIEW TEAM

Missoula, Montana, November 29, 2002 -- Membership in an eight-person scientific review team that will review parts of the revised Dakota Prairie Grasslands Plan was announced today by Brad Powell, Regional Forester for the Forest Service's Northern Region.

“After an exhaustive search, a rigorous evaluation process, and consultation with the Governor of North Dakota, I am pleased to announce the team,” Powell said. “We look forward to their unbiased overview of the science supporting the new plan’s grazing objectives.”

Powell’s decision that approved the Revised Dakota Prairie Grassland Plan directed the creation of an independent team to determine if the grazing portion of the plan can be implemented and to verify that grazing levels are similar to those projected in the plan’s Final Environmental Impact Statement. “The credentials, expertise and experience of team members is superb,” Powell said.

According to the Record of Decision signed July 31, 2002, the grazing standards and guidelines in the new plan will not go into effect until the review is complete.

This was done to allay concerns over the magnitude and uncertainty of the plan's effects on livestock grazing permittees and communities. The Forest Service estimated the average grazing reduction could be 9% while others contended the reductions would be 43 to 69%.

Dakota Prairies Grassland Supervisor Dave Pieper will guide the review process and provide the team 64 sample allotment management plans over a two year period. According to Pieper, the samples will be developed in cooperation with individual grazing permittees and grazing associations.

“We are committed to including individual permittees in this process so that we can tailor allotment plans to suit their needs as well as the needs of the resources we manage.” Pieper said. “I welcomed the review because it will provides the assurances that people need.”

“If things need to be changed as a result of the review process, we'll make the necessary and appropriate changes,” Pieper added.

The Review Team is comprised of eight experts in range and animal science, wildlife biology and grassland ecology. The range scientists are Rod Heitschmidt, Don Kirby, Kevin Sedivec, and Jeff Printz. Dr. Heitschmidt conducts research for the Agricultural Research Station in Miles City, Mt. and is the current President of the Society for Range Management. Drs. Kirby and Sedivec are on the range science staff at North Dakota State University, and Jeff Printz is the State Range Conservationist for the Natural Resource Conservation Service in Bismarck.

Douglas Johnson, Karen Smith, and Kent Luttswagger are experts in wildlife biology and grasslands ecology. Dr. Johnson works for the Northern Prairie Research Center in Jamestown, ND. Karen Smith works in North Dakota for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Kent Luttswagger is employed by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Williston, ND.

Dr. Harvey Peterson is a retired college animal science professor and is presently the Golden Valley County Extension Agent.

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