

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region



Contact: DeAnn Zwright, 303-275-5150; Pam Gardner, 303-275-5357 or Dave Steinke, 303-275-5365

DECISIONS ON COLORADO NATIONAL FOREST PLAN APPEALS ANNOUNCED

DENVER (March 30, 2001) -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has made its decision on appeals filed on revised land and resource management plans (forest plans) for three Colorado national forests: the Arapaho-Roosevelt, Rio Grande, and Routt.

The Department determined the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests/Pawnee National Grassland and Routt National Forest revised forest plans to be adequate. The Department instructed the Rio Grande National Forest to complete some additional work related to species viability, livestock grazing and monitoring. The Rio Grande intends to move quickly to meet the standards outlined by the Department.

The Department's finding will allow the national forests and national grassland to continue programs that could have been delayed while completing further analysis requested by the Forest Service's Washington Office decision on these appeals.

"We will continue moving forward with multiple-use programs and activities important to Colorado citizens," said Regional Forester Rick Cables, "including activities proposed to reduce fuel build ups in areas that could be threatened by wildfire."

In 1997 and 1998, Colorado Environmental Coalition, et al., Rocky Smith, and Biodiversity Associates appealed the revised forest plans. Issues raised by the appellants included their contention that the national forests failed to properly determine or provide for viable, diverse wildlife species.

In January, the Forest Service's Washington Office made its decisions on these appeals. The Washington Office found all three revised forest plans deficient on the issues of species viability and diversity and instructed the national forests to complete additional work.

The Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Region has initiated a regional species conservation approach to ensure a thorough evaluation of species viability. "Species conservation and ecosystem sustainability are critical components of our mission," said Cables. "We believe our approach will give us a regional perspective to further improve our conservation of species in forest plans and projects."

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Editorial Note: The Department's decision on these appeals may be found on the Forest Service website: www.fs.fed.us/forum/nepa/appealoverview.htm