



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

R3 Regional Office

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File Code: 2200-3

Date: April 9, 2004

Forest Guardians
312 Montezuma Ave.
Suite A
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Forest Guardians:

For some time now the Southwestern Region has considered the need for Regionally established guidelines for managing grazing and other national forest uses in view of the continued dry weather pattern throughout the southwest. Although the recent precipitation is greatly welcomed, we know that drought is an inevitable occurrence in the southwestern United States.

The question for land managers and national forest users throughout the Southwestern Region is not whether drought will occur, but rather whether land managers and those users dependent on national forest resources are prepared for drought. The purpose of this letter is to solicit ideas from a cross section of Forest Service stakeholders as to what type of direction and/or guidelines would be appropriate from the Regional level to guide national forest management during periods of drought such as that experienced throughout the Southwestern Region for the past number of years.

Following are some points we would like you to consider and share your ideas on:

- What would be the purpose or objectives of drought management guidelines established at a Regional level? Specifically, what should these types of guidelines attempt to address?
- What drought-related parameters (e.g. biological, physical, ecological) should be monitored to determine whether drought is occurring and/or ending in order to alert resource managers and users of a potential need to adjust on-the-ground management activities? There are various indexes resource managers can utilize to assess environmental conditions. How should other related parameters (e.g. social, economic) be factored into decision making (reduced stocking and/or restocking of grazing allotments)? We would like to know which ones you think would be most effective.
- What changes in management should be considered to respond to drought impacts, such as reduced stocking and/or restocking of rangelands?
- Are Regional Guidelines needed to provide consistency across National Forests, while still allowing for flexibility on a site-by-site basis?

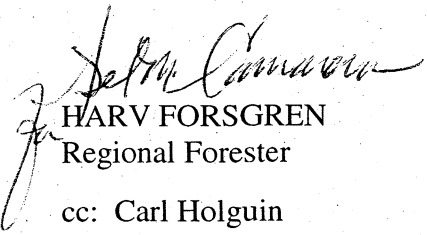


If you would like to convey your ideas on this subject, please respond with your written comments and ideas to the following address:

Attn: Judith Dyess, Rangeland Management Staff
USDA Forest Service
Southwestern Region
333 Broadway Blvd SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

If at all possible, we would like to have your written comments and ideas by May 3, 2004. If you desire to speak to someone on this subject, please call Judith Dyess of the Rangeland Management Staff at 505-842-3229. Thank you for your interest in management of national forests within the Southwestern Region.

Sincerely,



HARV FORSGREN
Regional Forester

cc: Carl Holguin