

File Code: 1920
Date:

Dear Objectors and Interested Persons:

As the objection reviewing officer for the Ashley National Forest Land Management Plan revision, I am providing my final written response to the objections (36 CFR 219.50, Subpart B). Jacqueline Emanuel, the reviewing officer for objections filed on the Regional Forester's list of species of conservation concern for the Ashley National Forest will provide a separate written response to those objections.

The legal notice of the objection period for the Ashley National Forest Land Management Plan revision and/or the Regional Forester's list of species of conservation concern for the Ashley National Forest was published on April 19, 2023, initiating a 60-day objection filing period. The objection period closed on June 20, 2023. I conducted my review in accordance with the pre-decisional administrative review process described in the Code of Federal Regulations at 36 CFR 219 subpart B. An independent review team made up of Forest Service specialists assisted me in the review and resolution of the objections. They reviewed the objection letters, identified substantive issues, and reviewed the planning record related to these issues. Consistent with the planning rule (36 CFR 219.57(b)(1)), I have consolidated issues and responses by resource area.

Many of you participated during the planning process, and I appreciate your engagement. The objection process allowed me as the reviewing officer, Forest Supervisor Susan Eickhoff as the responsible official, objectors, and interested persons the opportunity to collaboratively address issues prior to the revised Forest Plan's final decision. I very much appreciate that you were able to attend the resolution meeting on August 28, 2023, and represent your issues as an objector and/or interested person. The feedback I received at the meeting improved my understanding of the issues and suggested remedies and helped inform my decision.

My response includes an assessment of the issue, a conclusion of findings, and instructions for the Forest Supervisor to complete prior to making the final decision on the Ashley National Forest Land Management Plan. My response is attached and is also available on the forest plan revision website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49606>.

My response is the final determination of the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the objections (36 CFR 219.57(b)(3)). Please contact Katharine Haynes, Regional NEPA Specialist, at katharine.haynes@usda.gov with questions regarding this objection response.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH OAKESON
Objections Reviewing Officer
Deputy Regional Forester

Enclosure: Objection Response for the Ashley National Forest Land Management Plan Revision

cc: Susan Eickhoff, Melissa Steward, Heather McKenny, Katharine Haynes, Anastasia Allen, Jessica Satterfield

