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News Release

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USDA Forest Service releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Thunder Basin National Grassland Plan Amendment

(DOUGLAS, Wyo.) October 10, 2019 – The USDA Forest Service has released a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) to amend the Thunder Basin National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan. The proposed amendment will address management of black-tailed prairie dog colonies on National Forest System lands to balance colony conservation and control with other grassland uses.

A notice of availability (NOA) for the DEIS will publish in the Federal Register on Friday, October 11, 2019, initiating a 90-day public comment period that ends Thursday, January 9, 2020.

The DEIS provides an analysis of current management and compares four alternatives for prairie dog management. Issues raised during the April 2019 public scoping period and addressed in the analysis include viability of at-risk wildlife species, recovery of the endangered black-footed ferret, forage for permitted livestock, prairie dog encroachment onto private and state lands, and social and economic issues.

The analysis presents current science and integrates lessons learned from prairie dog management on the Thunder Basin National Grassland and other federally managed prairie dog habitats. The proposed action and action alternatives would establish prairie dog management zones along boundaries between National Forest System lands and private and state lands, allow the broader application of tools for colony conservation and control, decrease the acres of prairie dog colonies managed for conservation, and maintain management approaches to provide habitat for at-risk species.

A public meeting is scheduled on November 20, 2019 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Converse County Library in Douglas, Wyo. Project information and maps will be available, and grassland staff will be on hand to answer questions. A public webinar on the project is scheduled for November 21, 2019. Information for how to log in and participate in the webinar will be available on the project [website](#). The webinar begins at 11 a.m. and includes time for questions and answers with grassland staff.

The amendment is expected to be finalized in late 2020.

Comments can be submitted online through the [public participation forum](#). Comments can also be mailed to:

Thunder Basin Plan Amendment Comments
Thunder Basin National Grassland Supervisor's Office
2468 Jackson St, Laramie, WY 82070

The DEIS, project reference materials and maps are available on the [project web site](#). Current information related to restoration work and prairie dog colony management efforts on the Thunder Basin National Grassland is available [online](#).

For more information, contact Planning Team Leader Monique Nelson at (307) 275-0956 or monique.nelson@usda.gov.

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