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## News Release

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### USDA Forest Service Releases Final Environmental Impact Statement for Thunder Basin National Grassland Plan Amendment

**(DOUGLAS, Wyo.) May 14, 2020** – The USDA Forest Service has released the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and draft record of decision to amend the Thunder Basin National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan. The proposed amendment will address the management of black-tailed prairie dog colonies on National Forest System lands to allow federal land managers to respond to a variety of environmental and social conditions on the grassland. A notice of availability (NOA) for the FEIS will publish in the Federal Register on Friday, May 15, 2020.

The FEIS provides an analysis of current management and compares five alternatives for future prairie dog colony management. Issues raised during two public comment periods 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 colony 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 properties, allow broader application of tools for colony conservation and control, decrease the acres of prairie dog colonies managed for conservation, and maintain habitat for at-risk species.

The amendment is expected to be finalized in late 2020.

The FEIS, project reference materials and maps are available on the project web site at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=55479](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=55479).

Current information related to restoration work and prairie dog colony management efforts on the Thunder Basin National Grassland is posted at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/MBRTB/PrairieDogs>.

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