

# **NATIONAL GRASSLANDS MANAGEMENT**

## **A PRIMER**

### **Appendix A**



12/26/95

**REPORT**  
**of**  
**THE NATIONAL GRASSLANDS**  
**MANAGEMENT**  
**REVIEW TEAM**  
USDA Forest Service  
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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction**

The National Grasslands Management Review Report covers broad policy issues that influence the effectiveness of national grasslands management. The report assesses the current situation with an eye to meeting needs of the future. The findings and desired futures are a foundation for future action.

The review team did not try to address specific operational issues or provide a long list of suggested actions. They concentrated on what they felt to be the most important issues. It is important that the USDA Forest Service field organization, in concert with its partners, have substantial latitude to design actions that fit local conditions. At the same time, these actions need to contribute to a broad ecosystem approach to management.

### **Reasons for the Review**

The 1995 National Grasslands Management Review was conducted for a number of reasons, including:

- Increased internal and external debate about the current mission and direction for national grasslands.
- Questions about whether the national grasslands are organized to best meet today's challenges.
- Increased efforts by a variety of agencies and organizations to address issues characteristic of the Great Plains.
- Proposed national legislation specific to the national grasslands.
- Substantial time has passed since the last review in 1982.

### **Review Objectives**

*The Policy Framework:* Examine the missions, goals, and direction of the grasslands, particularly in relation to the issues and climate of today.

*Working With Others:* Determine the extent and effectiveness of involvement by users, state and local governments, Tribal governments, other partners, and the public.

*Effective Organizations:* Determine to what extent the Forest Service has the people and resources in place to deliver sound programs within the mission and objectives.

*Resource Stewardship, the Scientific Base, and Effective Implementation of Programs:* Determine if the necessary research base is available and whether the right kind of activities are occurring on the ground, including resource management and demonstration.

## The Setting

The national grasslands had their origin in the dust bowl years of the 1930's. Basic legislation leading to establishment of the national grasslands was the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937 (BJFTA). BJFTA was "An act to create the Farmers' Home Corporation, to promote more secure occupancy of farms and farm homes, to correct economic instability resulting from some present forms of farm tenancy, and for other purposes." Title III of the act authorized the federal government to purchase or otherwise acquire submarginal farmlands. The purchased areas were designated Land Utilization Projects (LUP's).

In 1954 the Forest Service assumed administration of about 3.85 million acres of LUP's from the Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resource Conservation Service). The remainder of the original 3.85 million acres was transferred to other agencies such as the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The lands administered by the Forest Service were designated as national grasslands in 1960 by the Secretary of Agriculture.

There are many characteristics that together make management of the national grasslands unique within the National Forest System (NFS).

- ◆ The national grasslands, for the most part, were acquired under the purchase authority of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937 (BJFTA).
- ◆ The BJFTA directs the Secretary of Agriculture to "...develop a program of land conservation and land utilization, in order thereby to correct maladjustment in land use..."
- ◆ By regulation, the national grasslands have a mission "...to demonstrate sound and practical principles of land used for the areas in which they are located..."
- ◆ The national grasslands comprise 3.85 millions acres or about 2 percent of the land base managed by the Forest Service.
- ◆ There are 20 national grasslands scattered in 12 different States and 7 regions of the Forest Service. Seventeen grasslands are located in the Great Plains.
- ◆ The agricultural sector is important to local economies.
- ◆ Substantial energy and other mineral development is occurring on the grasslands returning about \$150 million annually to the Federal treasury.
- ◆ Highly intermingled landownership patterns are the norm.
- ◆ Grassland ecosystems dominate.
- ◆ Management by grazing associations is a foundation for implementing grazing practices on a majority of national grasslands acreage.

The national grasslands are beginning to experience similar changes in resource demands and values that have been occurring on national forests over the last decade. Long-standing uses such as livestock grazing, mineral development, and hunting have to be managed within an environment of increasing demands for wildlife viewing, photography, rock hunting, and other

diverse interests. One of the most important emerging issues is the crucial role of the national grasslands for maintaining biological diversity within the Great Plains prairie ecosystems.

The largest vegetative province in North America is the native prairie. Some states have had declines in tall grass prairie of 99.9 percent. It is estimated that less than 34 percent of true mixed grass prairie and less than 23 percent of true short grass prairie still exist in native vegetation. This loss of native vegetation is due primarily to conversion to non-active crops; damming of major river systems for flood control and irrigation; and draining of wetlands for crop production. Overgrazing by livestock, suppression of fire, invasion of exotic plants, and fragmentation of native grasslands continue to have negative impacts on the remaining native grassland ecosystems.

There are currently 59 listed threatened or endangered species in the Plains, with another 728 candidates for listing. Of the 435 bird species that breed in the United States, 330 have been documented to breed in the Great Plains. Most of these species show declines of 14-91 percent due to losses of habitat critical for nesting and wintering. Prairie dog populations currently exist in less than 5 percent of their historic range. Species associated with the prairie dog are declining, and many are listed as threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

As the Forest Service recognizes and responds to these new demands on the national grasslands, some changes in management will result. Traditional users are becoming concerned that meeting demands for these multiple uses and values will be at the expense of more traditional uses and dependent livelihoods. These potentially conflicting interests have resulted in polarization of users of the grasslands. Inadequate communications between these interests and divergent demands for management of the national grasslands have further increased the level of concern and lack of trust in Forest Service management.

Livestock grazers are concerned that grazing will be further restricted on the national grasslands as competing interests such as wildlife and recreation become more vocal.

There is substantial opportunity for future management on the national grasslands to forge new partnerships with State and Federal agencies, Tribal governments, the academic community, organizations, and individuals. They can well serve as a model for enhancing ecosystem management, a base for demonstrating sound land use practices, and a catalyst for improving the efficiency of government.

## **Review Approach**

The team examined stewardship achievements and the unique characteristics of the national grasslands. They gained a sense of the scope of issues and current activities, and improved agency understanding of the significance of national grasslands within the NFS and relationships with stakeholders.

The national grasslands units that were visited include: the Buffalo Gap and Ft. Pierre National Grasslands and National Grasslands Visitor Center on the Nebraska National Forest (SD); the Little Missouri National Grassland on the Custer National Forest (ND), the Thunder Basin National Grassland on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest (WY); and the Comanche National Grassland on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest (CO). The team also met with Forest

Service, other agency, and public representatives from the Sheyenne, Oglala, Pawnee, Cimarron, Lyndon B. Johnson, Caddo, Black Kettle, McClellan Creek, Kiowa, and Rita Blanca National Grasslands. Crooked River, Curlew, and Butte Valley National Grasslands submitted written comments.

The team spoke with employees; individual permittees; grazing associations; congressional staffs; governor's representatives; local mayors; bankers; Chamber of Commerce members; rural development representatives; environmental organizations; sportsmen; outfitters and guides; oil, gas, and coal interests; the National Park Service; the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); the Fish and Wildlife Service; the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); State fish and game departments; county commissioners; paleontological interests; heritage resources; and other partners and interests. In all, the team had a dialogue with over 300 people.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS-WHAT IS WORKING WELL**

- ◆ The overall dedication, spirit and professionalism of Forest Service employees on the national grasslands is very high.
- ◆ National grassland grazing permittees should be recognized for their devotion to and care of rangelands.
- ◆ The process for revising the land and resource management plans for the northern Great Plains in the Northern and Rocky Mountain Regions is a good example of boundaryless collaboration between units.
- ◆ Mineral development and reclamation is a demonstration of sound land use practices.
- ◆ Model community involvement and economic development processes on some units have contributed to local economic diversification.
- ◆ Formal collaborative research between the Rocky Mountain Research Station Center for Great Plains ecosystem research at Rapid City, SD, and several Forest Service units demonstrates sound ties between the NFS and Research.
- ◆ Local relationships with congressional staffs were strong on most ranger districts.
- ◆ The National Grasslands Visitor Center at Wall, SD, is serving as a model for education and interpretation of the national grasslands and grasslands in general.
- ◆ State agencies consistently complimented Forest Service stewardship and improvements in range conditions. They noted that Forest Service management has favorably influenced management on neighboring lands.
- ◆ Some grassland districts are developing seed sources of native prairie plants to use in revegetating oil and mineral development sites. Seeding with locally adapted native species makes a positive contribution to maintaining the biodiversity of grassland ecosystems.



## FINDINGS AND DESIRED FUTURES

### Introduction

Findings of the review team are grouped under each of the four major objectives of the review. The objectives are interrelated, as are the findings.

Desired futures are designed as targets for the agency to aim at when designing management actions. They are written to provide a substantial degree of management flexibility to meet local situations, while at the same time addressing national interests. One coordinated action plan will be developed that includes all of the affected regions and the Washington Office. Actions can address more than one finding and desired future. They can also be adjusted as time passes to meet changing conditions.

Follow-up will be scheduled to monitor progress on action planned during meetings.

### Policy Framework

*Examine the missions, goals, and direction of the grasslands, particularly in relation to today's issues and climate.*

*Finding 1: Legislation and policy applicable to the national grasslands are not uniformly understood or accepted internally or externally. A common and shared vision for management of the national grasslands is lacking.*

- ◆ Grassland interests offered widely varying views of what existing legislation and regulations mean in today's economic and social environment.
- ◆ Ranching interests frequently cite the preamble of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, which states in part "...to promote more secure occupancy of farms and farm homes..." as providing a basic direction that gives livestock grazing preference over other uses.
- ◆ Current legislative attempts are directed, in part, at reinforcing the emphasis on grazing and ranching stability within the national grasslands. They further attempt to remove the grasslands from planning and other procedural requirements common to NFS lands today.
- ◆ National grasslands are perceived by many as being managed for grazing as a dominant use. Conversely, the perception exists, particularly by grazing permittees, that other interests such as wildlife, recreation, and conservation of biological diversity dominate management decisions.
- ◆ Many ranching interests feel that the Forest Service has moved away from the intent of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act.

*Finding 2: Policy direction specifically related to managing the national grasslands needs strengthening,*

- ◆ Conservation and wildlife interests have a common perception that the interests of livestock operators are overemphasized.
- ◆ In the mid-1980's, a Forest Service wide effort was implemented to condense policy direction for all resources. During this time, some of the manual direction specific to the national grasslands was deleted.
- ◆ For the last 15 years, grazing interests have been urging the Forest Service to develop separate regulations and policy for the national grasslands.
- ◆ Existing direction for the national grasslands was developed during an era when there were fewer multiple-use demands than now.
- ◆ New information indicates the growing importance of grassland ecosystems to biodiversity.

*Finding 3: The national grasslands need to be used more frequently and effectively to demonstrate and influence sound and practical management of grassland ecosystems.*

- ◆ A variety of interests advocated a stronger leadership role for the Forest Service in demonstrating sound land management.
- ◆ National grasslands form a significant portion of the public land base on the Great Plains, but their existence or purpose is not well understood by broad segments of the public.
- ◆ National grasslands and interrelated private lands have demonstrated a significant conservation success story since the Dust Bowl era.
- ◆ National grasslands offer substantial opportunities to demonstrate livestock grazing management, minerals development, threatened and endangered species conservation, wildlife management, and shared management between Federal and State agencies, organizations, and individuals.
- ◆ The multiple-use mandate applicable to the national grasslands provides flexibility to demonstrate a broad array of management approaches in an ecosystem management context.

## ***Desired Future***

1. Creation of a commonly understood vision for the national grasslands. The vision will be available for implementation in the revision of land and resource management plans applicable to the national grasslands.
2. A commonly understood vision will be used as a foundation for making adjustments as needed in regulation and national, regional, and local policy.
3. Grasslands will be considered showcases for demonstrating sound land management practices.

## **Working With Others**

*Determine the extent and effectiveness of involvement by users, State and local governments, Tribal governments, other partners, and the public.*

*Finding 1: The Forest Service needs to exert greater leadership in interagency, intergovernmental, and Tribal government collaboration..*

Following are examples of potential opportunities for better natural resource management. While these items are specific to the northern Great Plains, they are believed to be indicative of the kinds of opportunities that exist in and around the national grasslands generally.

- ◆ The Forest Service does not have a line officer with the delegated authority to be part of the Great Plains Partnership of the Western Governors Conference-a different person shows up for each meeting.
- ◆ The BLM and others in North Dakota strongly encouraged the Forest Service to participate with them in meetings of their resource advisory councils.
- ◆ The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in both North and South Dakota expressed strong support for so-called "seamless natural resource management," and a willingness to be used more than they currently are in cooperative conservation efforts.
- ◆ In Wyoming, the BLM took a positive view of a possible regional reassessment of the Forest Service/BLM interchange proposal. In North Dakota, the BLM expressed a willingness to move ahead with land interchange or outright shift of surface responsibilities to the Forest Service where feasible.
- ◆ Opportunities for better natural resource management exist at the State level as well. For example, the Abandoned Mine Land Fund in Wyoming (\$16-18 million annually) managed by the State Department of Environmental Quality, currently funds a variety of public works projects. Yet there is still mine reclamation work to be done, including projects on Federal land. One element that appears to be lacking is coordinated approach by the Federal land management agencies.
- ◆ The National Park Service indicated an interest in interpretive signing and better public accommodations on national grasslands in the vicinity of Badlands National Park. This

could both lessen recreation pressure in the park and increase national grassland prominence at the same time.

- ◆ Some grazing associations and permittees expressed interest in an information network from which they could become better informed about natural resource issues affecting them.
- ◆ In its long-range planning and environmental education efforts, the Forest Service needs to portray the "interdependence relationship" between public and private land more effectively. Some believe that too little recognition is given to natural resource contributions of private grazing lands, such as for game bird or big game habitat.

*Finding 2: The Forest Service is not as effective as it could be in bringing varied interests together, providing opportunities for input, and involving them in solutions. In some cases, our coordination and collaboration are too narrowly focused.*

- ◆ There is a perceived lack of Forest Service emphasis on local working relationships with new land users, grazing associations, and other groups.
- ◆ Concern was expressed that in requesting involvement in our issues, the Forest Service has too little regard for ranching time constraints, such as during livestock marketing.
- ◆ Some perceive that environmental groups can influence management issues on the national grasslands by "talking generalities," while the Forest Service requires the rancher to always talk specifically in terms of animal units.
- ◆ Grazing associations believe that the Forest Service does not give permittees enough credit for good range management and flexibility in grazing management.
- ◆ Cooperative efforts, such as watershed planning and wildlife habitat management, should include more agencies and groups that could make valid contributions.
- ◆ The South Dakota State Department of Resource Conservation and Forestry and the North and South Dakota Natural Resource Conservation Service offered to become involved in resolving Forest Service landownership adjustment and use issues.

*Finding 3: The Forest Service needs to be more active in coordinating and sharing resources with other USDA agencies and doing more to support common USDA goals.*

- ◆ Active relationships with U.S. Department of the Interior and State agencies appear to be more common than with USDA agencies.
- ◆ The Forest Service does not routinely include the NRCS in range allotment planning between the agency and the grazing associations and other permittees. The NRCS could assist both groups with inventory, engineering, planning, and grassland agriculture.

### ***Desired Future***

1. The Forest Service is seen as exercising a greater level of conservation leadership in the area of the national grasslands.
2. Written commitment(s) are developed with appropriate Federal and State agencies and others to achieve specific outcomes, including timeframes and strategies to be employed.
3. A management environment where all grassland interests believe that their views and concerns will be considered in natural resource decisions. National grassland leadership creates a forum or process to utilize public input into grassland policies, programs, and projects. Other Federal agencies, States, local governments, and grassland interests are utilized in the development and assessment of grassland policies.
4. National grasslands skills are acquired from a variety of external sources, including NRCS and are available at the right place and the right time.
5. USDA agencies clearly understand each other's missions and can articulate these missions within the community of interests. It is readily apparent to local residents that the agencies are mutually supportive and work in a complementary fashion.

### **Effective Organizations**

*Determine to what extent we have the people and resources in place to deliver sound programs within the mission and objectives.*

*Finding 1: Many people expressed the concern that national grasslands are treated disparately with national forests in terms of emphasis, human resources, skill levels, budgets, and regional assistance.*

- ◆ Some national grasslands lack sufficient staff expertise to accomplish our multiple-use mission and to carry out the intent of laws and regulations in an efficient and effective manner.
- ◆ Some believe there is an inequity in funding between national forest and national grassland units. Particular areas of concern are recreation, range, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fisheries, and heritage resources.
- ◆ Grassland units and their associated national forest headquarters do not have all the necessary expertise and skills to adequately address the issues and management needs of the national grasslands.
- ◆ There is a need for additional selected skills available at the grassland level, particularly in rangeland ecology; wildlife management; TES species management; botany; archeology; and paleontology.
- ◆ Grassland managers realize that as budgets decline, it will be more difficult to obtain the necessary skills for the local/field level of the organization. There will be a greater need to collaborate and partner with other agencies to obtain some expertise.

*Finding 2: The national grasslands in the Great Plains are not collaborating to the degree necessary to resolve current grassland issues.*

- ◆ Communications, collaboration, and cooperation among grassland units of the Great Plains are not occurring to a level that permits increased efficiency or effectiveness.
- ◆ Currently, the 20 national grasslands under Forest Service stewardship are managed by 7 different regions of the Forest Service and 10 different national forests.
- ◆ Most grassland rangers are isolated from each other. They generally do not have much interaction with their national forest ranger counterparts.
- ◆ The Forest Service has been underrepresented in liaison with the Great Plains Partnership or other multi-state, multi-agency efforts in the Great Plains.
- ◆ Management of TES species between regions of the Forest Service could be improved within the Great Plains.
- ◆ Coordination among grassland units and between grassland units and research units is not as frequent or as effective as it could be.
- ◆ Great Plains national grasslands share many of the same constituents and may be duplicating or missing opportunities to effectively coordinate with these constituents.
- ◆ Similar issues on national grasslands are dealt with differently on individual units (e.g., grazing association rules, prairie dog management, mountain plover management, and so forth), creating confusion with users and interests.
- ◆ Ecosystem-level assessments need to be coordinated between the four regions within the Great Plains.
- ◆ Interagency coordination within the Great Plains is occurring, but there is not as much interregional coordination of these efforts as there should be.
- ◆ There is a lack of inventory information and consistent processes for completing ecological or social assessments between regions within the Great Plains.
- ◆ There is a difference in emphasis in grassland land adjustments between regions of the Forest Service.

### ***Desired Future***

1. Grassland units are effectively collaborating and partnering with other agencies. Cost-sharing, volunteers, and partnerships with State agencies provide opportunities for needed skill levels and expertise. Forest Service leadership evaluates budget allocations between national forests and national grasslands and directs a shift in resources where it is needed to provide organizational or resource support to meet critical needs on the national grasslands.

2. An interregional structure, such as a "grassland council," exists to:
  - provide leadership to national grassland management;
  - facilitate coordination and consistent management for national grasslands while at the same time providing for local flexibility;
  - coordinate decision making at appropriate line officer levels;
  - achieve coordinated issue resolution and implementation of management decisions;
  - address grassland policy, budget, and organizational issues;
  - coordinate grassland assessments;
  - coordinate with other Government interests;
  - ensure coordination of, and involvement in, current and future grassland or Great Plains initiatives;
  - assure quality resource management of the national grasslands; and
  - increase organizational support (national and regional level) to the national grasslands.
3. Regular National Grassland Conferences are held to strengthen communications between national grassland unit managers and to give managers increased opportunities to work together.
4. National Grassland Centers of Excellence are functioning to provide a concentrated focus on: (1) quality resource planning and management; (2) consistency across unit boundaries; and (3) efficient use of personnel to accomplish program goals.

### **Resource Stewardship and the Scientific Base**

*Determine whether the necessary research base is available and whether the right kind of activities are occurring on the ground, including resource management and demonstration.*

*Finding 1: Grasslands units currently rely on a number of universities and on Forest Service Research for the science required to understand and manage grassland ecosystems. However, there are opportunities to expand cooperation and collaboration with more universities and with researchers with other agencies.*

- ◆ The Rocky Mountain Research Station is a major source of information on vegetation classification, vegetation monitoring, and the ecology of selected TES species.
- ◆ The Rocky Mountain Research Station Center for Great Plains Ecosystem Research at Rapid City, SD, cooperates with 11 universities as well as other State and Federal agencies to develop research information for land managers in the northern Great Plains.
- ◆ The Station's Grassland Research Unit in Albuquerque, NM, investigates ecosystems in the southern Great Plains.
- ◆ The research priorities for the two units, developed in cooperation with land managers, include ecological classification, rangeland restoration, monitoring, and the response of plant and animal communities to fire and grazing.

- ◆ Substantial effort in both research units is focused on plants and animals that are endangered, threatened, or declining, such as prairie dogs, the black-footed ferret, the prairie fringed orchid, and neotropical migratory birds.
- ◆ Managers have identified a number of major information needs where research information is lacking or inadequate:
  - Prairie dogs, prairie chickens, sharp-tailed grouse, and other threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species.
  - Rare plants.
  - Residual cover for neotropical migratory birds and other wildlife.
  - Controlling invasive exotic plants and restoring native plant communities.
  - Managing woody draws and riparian communities.
  - Prescribed fire.

*Finding 2: Although managers are using current information and are, in most cases, working in close collaboration with researchers, some grazing interests are suspicious of or disagree with Forest Service technical conclusions.*

- ◆ Allegations were made that the Forest Service relies too heavily on Forest Service research and ignores research conducted by land grant and other western universities.
- ◆ One grazing association is funding a technical consultant for the expressed purpose of discrediting Forest Service technical conclusions.
- ◆ Controversy over technical conclusions is due, in part, to resistance to new vegetation standards to meet resource goals other than grazing.

*Finding 3: TES species are emerging as a critical concern on national grasslands, and additional information and monitoring is needed for effective management.*

- ◆ Federal classification currently lists 59 grassland species as threatened or endangered, and the number is increasing.
- ◆ Another 728 species are listed as candidates for threatened or endangered status.
- ◆ Grassland bird species have shown more widespread and steeper declines than any other group of birds in North America.
- ◆ Information on distribution and abundance is lacking for many TES species.
- ◆ There is insufficient information to develop conservation strategies for many of the currently listed species, and the forests and districts are ill-equipped to comply with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.
- ◆ A threatened and endangered species coordinator position has been established for the Great Plains to coordinate assessments threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and to establish management and research priorities.
- ◆ Program funding has been inadequate to support needed surveys, monitoring, and assessments for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.



- ◆ Remaining natural habitats and some grassland communities within the Great Plains are largely confined to extremely limited public lands. National grasslands will play an increasingly important role in providing critical habitat for TES species.
- ◆ The geographic isolation of many of the grassland units makes it difficult to share expertise among units.
- ◆ Of the threatened, endangered, or sensitive species or candidates in the Great Plains, the Forest Service has worked only on the prairie fringed orchid, greater prairie chicken, black-tailed prairie dog, black-footed ferret, swift fox, ferruginous hawk, blowout penstemon, and mountain plover-fewer than a dozen.

*Finding 4: Monitoring and evaluation have not been used effectively to determine whether our management decisions have been implemented or to evaluate what is or is not working.*

- ◆ Forest plans should be reviewed to determine if appropriate standards and guidelines have been established for all important resources and issues.
- ◆ Lack of monitoring or monitoring reports has diminished public credibility.

*Finding 5: Current forest plans for the national grasslands focus primarily on commodity issues, such as grazing and huntable wildlife, and have not fully incorporated more recent important issues.*

- ◆ Management direction, standards, and guidelines are lacking for many significant resources, values, and issues outside of commodity issues.
- ◆ Direction provided in forest plans is generally inadequate to address changes in resource demands and public uses of grasslands that have occurred since the first generation of plans.
- ◆ Issues lacking adequate management direction, standards, or guidelines in many forest plans include:
  - The ecological role of prairie dogs.
  - TES species.
  - Desired vegetation conditions for management objectives other than grazing.
  - Recreational vehicles.
  - The role of fire.
  - Noxious weeds.
  - Woody draws and riparian communities.
- ◆ In addition, competing issues and values and tradeoffs have not been fully analyzed.
- ◆ There is wide variation in land and resource management plans for the national grasslands. There is a lack of consistency in standards, guidelines, and management strategies for similar issues.

### *Desired Future*

1. Forest Service Research, in collaboration with managers of the national grasslands and western universities, develops an agenda and priorities for research on the national grasslands and prairie ecosystems.
2. Ecological classifications will be completed for all riparian and upland sites on the grasslands.
3. Revised forest plans provide a comprehensive assessment of resource capabilities, demands, and issues associated with national grasslands, as well as scientifically credible standards and guidelines for meeting resource management policies and objectives. Desired Future: Habitat Conservation Assessments, conservation plans, and recovery plans will be developed for TES species, particularly identified key species.
4. Reasonable wildlife and botanical expertise is provided to each of the grassland units.
5. Monitoring programs are designed and implemented to provide periodic assessment of resource conditions and trends and the effectiveness of prescribed management activities. The results of monitoring programs are used to adapt management activities to changing or unanticipated conditions.
6. Revised forest plans provide a comprehensive assessment of resource capabilities, demands, and issues associated with national grasslands, as well as credible standards and guidelines for meeting resource management policies and objectives.
7. Revision of forest plans will be coordinated across regions and forests. Standards and guidelines are consistent across administrative boundaries for similar ecological situations. Coordination will provide consistent direction while allowing flexibility in meeting local needs.

## **PLANNED FOLLOW-UP**

1. The results of the review will be presented to the Forest Service National Leadership Team in January 1996, at their winter meeting.
2. The review report will be sent to all applicable regions and stations in December with a request to prepare draft action plans by February 10, 1996.
3. A mechanism will be established to coordinate the development of action plans between regions, stations, and the Washington Office.
4. The review team or subsequently designated representatives will assess overall progress in meeting action plans and file a report with the Chief on or before January 1, 1997 and 1998.
5. Representatives from the review team will make a series of small group visits to a cross section of national grasslands to interact further with employees and users in field surroundings, to demonstrate increased emphasis and commitment to national grassland management, and to make continual adjustment in management actions.

## **REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS**

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