



# Revision Reporter

Dakota Prairie Grasslands - Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest - Nebraska National Forest

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## Balancing the Many Needs of a Traveling Public

Arguments are inevitable when discussing the great many issues surrounding travel management on public land. Some people argue that closing areas to motorized use is a hardship on the elderly or disabled or other people who like to drive to their recreation destinations. Others can argue that not closing some areas to motorized use discriminates against those who seek recreational destinations where backcountry experiences and solitude are desired.

The Forest Service must make some tough decisions that affect how, where and when users access national grasslands and forests on the Northern Great Plains.

According to Dave Cawrse, leader for the Northern Great Plains planning team, travel management is a question of multiple use. "We have a diverse public—all-terrain vehicle riders, hikers, livestock permittees, hunters, roadless enthusiasts—all want some lands available for their particular uses," Cawrse

says. "We want to offer a variety of travel opportunities on national grasslands and forests to the extent that we can and still care for the land," Cawrse adds.

### It's truly a balancing act.

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In short, travel management can be defined as “the movement of people and products to and through national forests and national grasslands.” Travel management connects many different users and multiple uses on National Forest System lands.

Pat Irwin, district ranger for the Pine Ridge Ranger District on the Nebraska National Forest, recognizes the complexities of travel management. “Travel management, just the term, can confuse the public. It confuses me sometimes. It touches on just about everything we do out there.”

When all is said and done, some changes in travel management are expected. Areas previously available to motorized travel on and off established routes may carry motorized restrictions. Specific routes may become designated travelways reserved for certain kinds of uses—for instance, mountain bikes only, or motorized recreational vehicles only.

“We know we have some areas on the Pine Ridge where resource damage caused by unrestricted motorized travel is really taking a toll on the land,” Irwin explains.

Irwin isn’t assigning blame to any particular group. She simply feels that the Forest Service has got to make rational decisions concerning where people should be allowed to operate motorized vehicles.

But travel management doesn’t stop with motorized traffic. Mechanized traffic, including mountain bikes, can affect sensitive resources. In fact, the presence of anyone—even hikers—in some areas, such as spring birthing grounds for wildlife, like bighorn sheep, can be an intrusion most people would recognize as undesirable, as poor

people who make the effort to hike into a remote area in search of solitude should not have to hear the roar of motorized vehicles. Some areas should be made available so they can appreciate solitude. But not everywhere. Others a few miles away should be able to drive into an area to picnic, to hunt, to birdwatch, if that’s what they choose to do.

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**“Travel management, just the term, can confuse the public. It confuses me sometimes. It touches on just about everything we do out there.”**

Pat Irwin, Pine Ridge District Ranger  
Nebraska National Forest

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stewardship of the public resources the Forest Service is entrusted to manage.

Still, some resources must be accessible. Range permittees must access the developments upon which livestock depend, such as water tanks, fences, and windmills, to make repairs.

Firefighters must be able to respond quickly to dangerous conflagrations. That may mean using water tankers and bulldozers to build firelines for the protection of people and their property.

A mix of opportunities might be the appropriate solution. Ideally,

Such a mix of opportunities will be displayed in the alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement for the Northern Great Plains Management Plans Revision. When the draft environmental impact statement is released, the public will be asked to comment on the draft alternatives, including how well travel management direction meets their particular needs or desires.

Inevitably, people will disagree. Inevitably, the Forest Service will have to make some difficult decisions. §

# Larry Dawson Selected as New Grassland Supervisor

Over the past several years, national grasslands have received increased attention from the Forest Service. A 1995 Forest Service review of national grassland management led to some important actions, including creation of the National Grassland Council. The Northern Great Plains planning effort is another example of the Forest Service addressing the issues unique to grassland resources.

In April, Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck further demonstrated his commitment to national grasslands by establishing a national grassland administrative unit in North Dakota. The new grassland supervisor's office is named the Dakota Prairie Grasslands and is located in Bismarck. The office oversees management of the three national grasslands in North Dakota—Little Missouri, Cedar River, and Sheyenne—and the Grand River National Grassland in South Dakota.

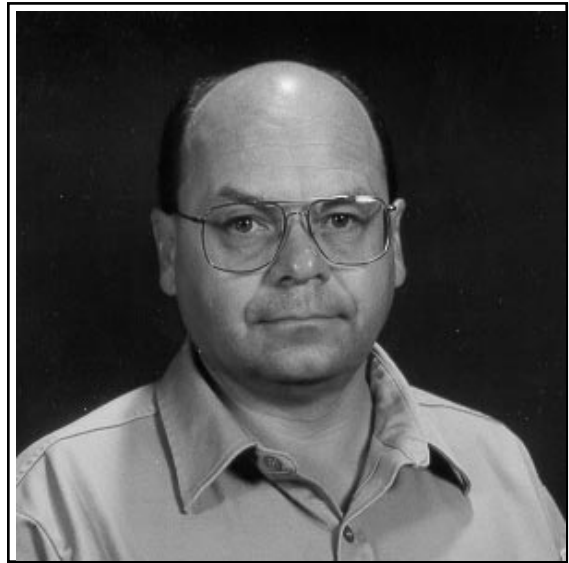
Chief Dombeck asked Northern Regional Forester

**"There are few times in a person's career an opportunity to create a new organization from scratch comes around," stated Dawson.**

Dale Bosworth, based in Missoula, Mont., to determine the staffing and funding needs of the new supervisor's office. Bosworth selected Larry Dawson to fill the role of grassland supervisor. Dawson assumed his new position in September, leaving his job as district ranger for the Medora Ranger District of the Little Missouri National Grassland in Dickinson. In making the announcement, Bosworth stated that he was pleased to have someone with Dawson's leadership abilities to head up this new administrative unit. "Larry has a unique ability

to work with people of different viewpoints and philosophies," said Bosworth.

Dawson has been the district ranger in Dickinson since February 1997. He began his Forest Service



career in 1978, and has held positions as Job Corps Center Director in Wisconsin, district ranger in Minnesota, and forester in Montana and Washington. Dawson grew up in Nebraska where his father

worked in the livestock industry. It was from his Nebraska roots and his family that he developed a love of the prairie at an early age.

Dawson faces many challenges in his new job. The most immediate challenge is getting a new office up and running. "This is done so seldom, there isn't much institutional knowledge on how to do it. Hiring a staff and finding a building are going to be big challenges," Dawson said. Custer National Forest Supervisor Nancy Curriden, who has had

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management responsibility for these national grasslands, has worked with Dawson to put together a transition team and schedule. According to Dawson, “Our goal is to have an orderly transition. We hope to have an approved organization by January, and a fully staffed and functioning organization by October of next year.”

Besides challenges, Dawson also sees an exciting opportunity. “There are few times in a person’s career an opportunity to create a new organization from scratch comes around,” stated Dawson. He also considers this a great period in the history of national grasslands. “There is a growing recognition of the uniqueness and values of the national grasslands.”

In Dawson’s view, it is tremendously significant that the Forest Service Chief would recognize national grasslands in a time of Forest Service downsizing. “He must feel very committed to the national grasslands to create an additional office in an organization that has been downsizing over most of this decade,” stated Dawson.

Dawson thinks his experiences working with people of diverse backgrounds and value systems will be an asset in his new role. “Growing up on the

prairie in Nebraska, my father was involved in the livestock industry most of my life. I’m very comfortable with the cultures of the northern prairie,” said Dawson.

Increasing demands on limited public lands is making their management more complex. According to Dawson, “Our challenge is to work in a collaborative manner with all the public interests. Traditional users are very important, and the economic values to the local communities are tremendous and have to be considered.” Dawson also points out that federal laws and policies recognize that the grasslands are important to national interests as well.

Revision of the land and resource management plan for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands is underway and offers opportunities for both the public and the national grassland managers. Dawson sees the revised management plan as a road map for land managers. “The revised management plan should take the national grasslands into the 21st century by meeting the needs, wants, desires, and values of people who care about the national grasslands and who depend on them for their livelihood.” §

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## Revised Notice of Intent to be Published

In February of 1997, we published a notice of intent in the Federal Register notifying people of our intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in conjunction with the revision of the land and resource management plans. While the Federal Register has limited reader audience, this publication is a requirement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA regulations also state that a revised notice of intent must be published when major changes have occurred in the original notice. A revised notice of intent for the Northern Great Plains Management Plans Revision will soon be published describing some changes that have occurred. Those changes include:

- A delay in the release of the draft environmental impact statement from the June 1998 date to February 1999.

- A transfer of administrative responsibility from the Custer National Forest to the Dakota Prairie Grasslands for the Cedar River, Grand River, Little Missouri, and Sheyenne National Grasslands.
- A change in responsible officials from Hal Salwasser to Dale Bosworth as Northern Regional Forester and responsible official for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands decision, and from Elizabeth Estill to Lyle Laverty as the Rocky Mountain Regional Forester and responsible official for the Medicine Bow-Routt (Thunder Basin National Grassland) and Nebraska National Forests' decisions.
- The National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will be listed as cooperating agencies for the environmental analysis. The NPS will make a decision concerning management of the Little Missouri River under their jurisdiction based on the analysis. Also, resulting Forest Service decisions could affect subsurface mineral leasing decisions made by BLM, thus their involvement as a cooperating agency. §

# Collaborative Groups Offer the Forest Service Their Management Ideas



**F**ive groups have offered the Forest Service their ideas concerning future management of national grasslands and forests on the Northern Great Plains.

The groups consisted of people working collaboratively on a range of issues. Collaborative groups were convened in five locations: Lemmon, South Dakota; Slope County, North Dakota; Lisbon, North Dakota; Halsey, Nebraska; and Hot Springs, South Dakota. Their efforts will be represented in one or more of the five draft alternatives being developed as part of the Northern Great Plains Plans Revision process.

The emphasis of the group discussion in Lemmon, South Dakota, centered on prairie dog management for the nearby Grand River National Grassland.

The concerns of the group in Slope County, North Dakota, address a whole host of issues pertaining to the Little Missouri National Grassland in the extreme southwestern part of North Dakota. Topics have included bison grazing on the Little Missouri, special area management, including the ponderosa pine and several geologic and paleontologic sites within Slope County, the future of roadless areas in Slope County,

and the spread of undesirable plants, such as leafy spurge.

The group in Lisbon, North Dakota, met to discuss what the desired future conditions on the Sheyenne National Grassland should be. Their discussions have helped Forest Service managers better understand how to describe desired vegetative conditions on the Sheyenne National Grassland.

The efforts of the group in Halsey, Nebraska, centered on management of the 20,000 acres of hand-planted forest stands in the two Nebraska Sandhills units of the Nebraska National Forest—Bessey and the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest. They discussed whether or not this non-native forest should be allowed to return to native grassland or if it should be managed and manipulated, in varying degrees, to provide a forested environment in central Nebraska.

The group in Hot Springs, South Dakota, drafted an alternative for the western half (Fall River Ranger District) of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. This alternative, and the options and results of the other collaborative groups, will be analyzed and compared in the draft environmental impact statement for public review and comment. §

**Don't forget to send in your postcard.**



We recently mailed you a postcard asking for your preference for draft documents.

You have a choice of receiving a **SUMMARY** of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plans or the **COMPLETE DOCUMENTS**--the full Draft EIS and any or all of the Management Plans for the three administrative units (Dakota Prairie Grasslands, Thunder Basin National Grassland, or Nebraska National Forest and Associated Units.)

Although it will be awhile before the documents go to the printer, we need to start anticipating the printing needs.

## Northern Great Plains Planning

### Revising Management Plans for the following units:

#### Dakota Prairie Grasslands

- Cedar River National Grassland
- Grand River National Grassland
- Little Missouri National Grassland
- Sheyenne National Grassland

#### Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest Unit

- Thunder Basin National Grassland

#### Nebraska National Forest Units

- Charles E. Bessey Tree Nursery
- Buffalo Gap National Grassland
- Fort Pierre National Grassland
- Nebraska National Forest
- Oglala National Grassland
- Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest



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