

NOTICE for PUBLIC COMMENT
Sioux 2003 Range Analysis Project
USDA-Forest Service
Custer National Forest - Sioux Ranger District
Camp Crook, South Dakota

The intent of this notice is to inform the public that the Forest Service, Custer National Forest, Sioux Ranger District has completed an environmental assessment (EA) for the Sioux 2003 Range Analysis Project. The project area is located in Harding County, South Dakota.

The 2003 Range Analysis project evaluates the effects of livestock grazing on eleven grazing allotments in the North and South Cave Hills and the East Short Pines land Units.

The Responsible Official for this project is District Ranger, George Foley. Based on the analysis presented in the EA, the District Ranger intends to select **Alternative 3** for implementation. Two allotments would have stocking rate reductions to bring them into compliance with the Custer National Forest Management Plan and to bring them in line with the estimated carrying capacity. Incorporating private lands associated into one of the allotments offsets the reduction in numbers. The other nine allotments will see no change in stocking rates. Four pastures within the 11 allotments will see a change in grazing pasture rotations and season of use to reduce grazing during the time that hardwood draws are most susceptible to grazing damage. Nine water developments will be either reconstructed or relocated to reduce environmental impacts to both hardwood draws and heritage sites.

The District Rangers rationale for the selection of **Alternative 3** is that it moves the pastures within these allotments toward desired condition; incorporates recent changes in management concerns for upland, riparian and hardwood draw management; meets the purpose and need to maintain or improve range vegetative conditions to “good” or better as noted in the Forest Plan; maintains and improves the condition and location of existing and proposed range improvements; maintains or restores riparian areas to desired condition, maintains or restores hardwood draws to desired condition; maintains or improves wildlife habitats in Management Areas with management emphasis on wildlife; and protects heritage sites that are affected by livestock grazing.

The Environmental Assessment analyzes in detail the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative 3), the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), and one additional action Alternative, Alternative 2, which is No Grazing. Alternative 3 has been described above. The No Grazing Alternative (number 2) would include removal of livestock improvements along with all livestock grazing on National Forest System Lands. Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative is no change to the current management scheme.

Comments on this EA are solicited from you and other reviewers. As the Responsible Official, District Ranger George Foley will consider all public comments before making a decision. In submitting comments, please provide specific facts along with supporting reasons that you believe should be considered by the Responsible Official in reaching a decision. Comments may be submitted in writing, orally, or through electronic means. In order to retain your administrative appeal rights, you must provide substantive written, oral, or electronic comments during this 30-day comment period. This legal notice will be published in the newspaper of record and the comment period will start on the day following publication of the legal notice and ends 30 days following the date of publication. Your comments must be postmarked no later than the end of the 30-day comment period. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on and will be available for public inspection.

A complete EA with color maps showing the alternatives and activities proposed is available for viewing and downloading on the Custer National Forest website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/custer/>. To request a paper copy of the EA contact Laurie Walters-Clark at 605-797-4432. Send written comments to:

George Foley, Sioux District Ranger
Sioux 2003 Range Analysis Project
Sioux Ranger District
P.O. Box 37
Camp Crook, SD 57724
Office Hours: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM M-F
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and Federal Holidays

Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, faxed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice. Hand delivered comments must be time and date imprinted at the correct Responsible Official's office by the close of business on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone or in person, or if during non-business hours, must be at an official agency function (such as a public meeting), which is designed to elicit public comment.

Electronic comments may be submitted to comments-northern-custer-sioux@fs.fed.us. The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement form the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.