

*An Opportunity for Flexibility*  
**Elkhorn Ranchlands**  
**Little Missouri National Grassland**

**Dave Pieper**  
**Dakota Prairie Grasslands**  
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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to initiate a dialogue among stakeholders over the future livestock grazing use of the recently acquired Elkhorn Ranch in the Little Missouri National Grasslands of western North Dakota. This acquisition provides a rare opportunity to provide flexibility to both livestock grazers and USDA Forest Service land managers. A brief history of the national grasslands and other pertinent material is included herein to provide context. An opportunity to manage differently is explored.

The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The staff of the Dakota Prairie Grasslands currently coordinates with numerous cooperators and the public in the management of the national grasslands to deliver ecological, social and economic sustainability via the multiple-use concept. Without impairing the productivity of the land, implementing this concept allows for outdoor recreational use such as hunting, watershed and soil protection, minerals exploration and development, livestock grazing use, and wildlife and plant habitat protection. I propose that this concept be applied to, and expanded on, the Elkhorn Ranch acquisition.

Under my proposal, energy companies would lease and develop the federal minerals estate. Academia, conservation groups and other agencies would collect resource information and fund habitat improvement and restoration projects. Heritage sites would be interpreted and protected. The livestock grazing association would cooperate in the management of livestock and range resources. The National Park Service would be invited to share in the management of the "viewshed" as seen from the ranch veranda of our nation's 26<sup>th</sup> president, Theodore Roosevelt. No one use would be dominant.

A key feature of my proposal would be to use the newly acquired lands and associated national grassland allotments as a forage reserve or "grassbank", which is simply defined as forage exchanged for conservation benefits. The grassbank would be available to all Medora Grazing Association members during times of drought, wildfire, or restoration of association managed lands.

An alternative championed by some interests would designate that these lands would be available only to a few MGA members through a re-distribution process, and grazed similarly to other association administered lands. This alternative would forego the unique opportunity provided by the Elkhorn Ranch acquisition. Specifically, it would mean that in some grazing allotments anticipated reductions in livestock numbers would proceed. These estimated reductions were determined through analysis during the revised Land and Resource Management Plan process and will be verified as the Dakota Prairie Grasslands concludes site specific management plans for each grazing allotment. These reductions would impact a number of grazing permittees. Conversely, at least a portion of these reductions could be obviated by the grassbank should my proposal be accepted and implemented. In conclusion, the acquisition offers a rare opportunity for flexibility in the Dakota Prairie Grasslands' livestock grazing program to protect and restore grassland resources while benefitting livestock grazers.

## **Introduction**

The acquisition of the Elkhorn Ranch by the USDA-Forest Service has created a number of challenging and exciting opportunities for the public, national grassland users, key stakeholders, and grassland managers alike. The newly acquired lands provide expanded outdoor recreational pursuits such as hiking, horseback riding and hunting, permanent protection of an outstanding national historic site, and restoration of diminishing native grasslands and prime wildlife habitat.

The Elkhorn Ranchlands presents a unique nexus of interested parties, administrative flexibility, and funding availability. Now is the time to take advantage of the opportunities the purchase provides and set up the ranch's future management plan.

The family - the grazing permit holder - with historical preference for grazing on nearby national grasslands allotments has sold their ranch (also called base property) to the Forest Service. Roughly 23,000 acres of public land has become unencumbered by any individual or family ranching operation. Even though the land is included under a grazing agreement with the Medora Grazing Association, the historical ranch and associated national grassland grazing allotments can be considered "vacated". No individual or family has a term permit or priority preference to graze these acres.

Besides the availability of world-class recreational and cultural opportunities, the ranchlands could become the model for grassland agriculture and multiple use while providing much needed flexibility in the Dakota Prairie Grasslands livestock grazing program through the demonstration of progressive conservation principles. The lands could be made available to area ranchers during times of drought, wildfire or restoration of their own grazing pastures.

Many different organizations, groups and individuals have participated in the ranch acquisition process through written, vocal, and financial support. Many of these stakeholders have also indicated their desire to engage in a collaborative process to determine the future management direction of the ranchlands. The Forest Service had indicated early in the process that it would engage the public.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to begin a dialogue over the future livestock grazing use of the ranch and associated national grassland allotments, now known as the Elkhorn Ranchlands. Under its multiple use mandate, the Forest Service will continue to support and maintain traditional uses such as livestock grazing and oil and gas development on the ranchlands. The Forest Service and the Medora Grazing Association have agreed to honor the current livestock grazing leases the previous owners entered into on the Elkhorn Ranchlands until the end of 2009. At that time a management plan, defining the use of these lands needs to be in place.

To provide context and background, this paper will include: 1) a brief history of the national grasslands and the Dakota Prairie Grasslands, 2) a discussion of the unit's Land and Resource Management Plan (Grassland Plan), 3) a review of some Scientific Review Team issues and recommendations, 4) a recap of the Eberts Ranch acquisition, 5) a brief discussion of relevant Forest Service range administration direction and policy, 6) a summary of presented information, and 7) an overview of some conclusions and observations and a recommendation to use the Elkhorn Ranchlands as a forage reserve, commonly called a "Grassbank" (the term "Grassbank" was coined by rancher and poet Drum Hadley).

### **National Grasslands History**

Most of the nation's national grasslands were acquired in the 1930s through a large scale "land utilization program" (LUP). The purpose of the LUP was to address the use of "submarginal" lands, to improve the economic conditions of people owning and occupying those lands, and to transfer these lands to their most suitable use. The LUP projects culminated with the passage of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (BJFTA) in 1937. Approximately eleven million acres were purchased, mostly on the Great Plains. The preamble to the BJFTA stated that its purpose was:

To create the Farmer's Home Corporation, to promote more secure occupancy of farms and farm homes, to correct the economic instability resulting from some present forms of farm tenancy and for other purposes.

While it is often argued that the Forest Service should recognize livestock grazing as the preferred and predominant use on national grasslands because it would "promote more secure occupancy of farms and farm homes," it should be noted that a preamble of a statute is not part of the statute, although it does contribute to its understanding.

The record shows that livestock grazing in accordance with a grazing-management plan would be an integral part of the program; however, it doesn't indicate that livestock grazing would be the dominant use of these acquired lands. The legislation contains no language with regards to livestock grazing and it is not apparent from the remaining Title of the BJFTA whether livestock grazing on national grasslands is even one (let alone the only) way that the secure occupancy of farms and farm homes may be promoted. The Forest Service, however, acknowledges that livestock grazing on the national grasslands contributes significantly to community economic stability and to maintaining healthy ecological conditions. Livestock grazing continues to be a key component of the multiple-use rubric on the national grasslands.

The BJFTA contained four titles. Title I authorized the Secretary to make loans, Title II authorized rehabilitation loans and voluntary adjustments of indebtedness, and Title IV established the Farmers Home Corporation. These titles were repealed by Congress in 1961. Title III resulted in the formal establishment of the LUP and has been amended several times by Congress since 1937, and today reads as follows:

## Section 31, TITLE III – RETIREMENT OF SUBMARGINAL LAND

**The Secretary is authorized and directed to develop a program of land conservation and land utilization, in order thereby to correct maladjustments in land use, and thus assist in controlling soil erosion, reforestation, preserving natural resources, protecting fish and wildlife, developing and protecting recreational facilities, mitigating floods, preventing impairment of dams and reservoirs, developing energy resources, conserving surface and subsurface moisture, protecting the watersheds of navigable streams, and protecting the public lands, health, safety, welfare, but not to build industrial parks or establish private industrial or commercial enterprises. (7 U.S.C. 1010)**

Even though the language in the remaining title does not specifically mention multiple use, the phrases in total suggest or infer the concept. The multiple use mandate is the cornerstone of the Forest Service management approach and a primary reason behind the agency's successful acquisition of the Elkhorn Ranch.

In 1954 the Secretary of Agriculture transferred the responsibility for administering the LUP from the Soil Conservation Service to the Forest Service. In 1960 the Secretary designated these lands located mostly in the Great Plains as national grasslands. The Forest Service currently administers twenty national grasslands consisting of about 3.8 million acres of federal land. Other LUP purchased lands were either transferred or sold.

In 1974 Congress enacted the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act defining the National Forest System to include the national grasslands and subjecting these lands to the full array of laws that applied generally to the Forest Service in administration of agency lands. Some of the applicable laws include the National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, and National Environmental Policy Act.

The Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 213) pertaining to the national grasslands direct that the lands be administered under **“sound and progressive principles of land conservation and multiple use, and to promote development of grassland agriculture and sustained-yield management of the forage, fish and wildlife, timber, water, and recreation resources...”**; that national grasslands resources are managed so as to **“maintain and improve soil and vegetative cover and to demonstrate sound and practical principles of land use for the areas in which they are located”**; and that to the extent feasible, policies for the administration of national grasslands **“exert a favorable influence for securing sound land conservation practices on associated private lands.”**

In addition to providing significant oil and gas exploration and development opportunities and numerous outdoor recreation activities, the Dakota Prairie Grasslands provides grazing opportunities for over 500 livestock producers and forage for about 63,000 cattle.

The record shows these lands were administered by a host of USDA agencies since the 1930s and that through congressional action, agency rule making and public input, the goals and purposes of these lands have evolved over time. This changing landscape has not only created consternation and controversy with some users but also opportunity and relevancy for others. The public wants a variety of uses from its public lands and expects its public land managers to balance the multiple use equation to ensure ecologically sustainable lands while continuing to provide recreational and economic opportunities.

### **Dakota Prairie Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan**

The Dakota Prairie Grasslands (DPG) was created in 1998 to manage the three national grasslands in North Dakota and one in northwestern South Dakota. Prior to 1998 these national grasslands were managed through the Custer National Forest located in Billings, MT.

In conjunction with the Nebraska National Forest and the Thunder Basin National Grassland, the DPG completed its Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (hereafter “Plan”) in 2002. Consistent with the multiple use mandate for the national grasslands, the purpose of the Plan is to guide all resource management activities on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands such as outdoor recreation, oil and gas development, livestock grazing, wildlife habitat and physical resources protection, and special interest areas management.

Consistent with the National Forest Management Act and National Environmental Policy Act, several alternatives were developed for revising the Custer National Forest Plan for lands administered by the DPG. The process generated over 70,000 comments from the public and stakeholders resulting in the first stand alone plan for the national grasslands in North Dakota and northwestern South Dakota.

Parts of the Plan, however, continue to be controversial and polarizing. One area of continuing controversy is livestock grazing. During the planning process assumptions were questioned and some groups estimated grazing reductions would approach 69% with its implementation. The Regional Forester “phased” the livestock grazing decision and appointed an independent Scientific Review Team (SRT) to determine if the grazing portion of the Plan could be implemented and to verify that grazing levels were similar to those projected in the revised Grasslands Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The SRT concluded, with qualifications, that the Plan could be implemented and that grazing levels were similar to those projected in the FEIS. The Livestock Grazing Record of Decision (ROD) was completed in September 2006. Attached to the ROD were the SRT’s final Report and the Forest Service’s final response to the Report. The Grassland Plan has been affirmed by both the Forest Service Chief and the office of the USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment.

## **Scientific Review Team Drought and Fire**

In Section VIII of its final report, the Scientific Review Team states: “There is no clear, proactive, destocking or grazing management plan for dealing with the detrimental effects of drought on livestock and wildlife grazing capacities.” The SRT goes on to say that the key to an effective drought management strategy is that management tactics be largely proactive rather than reactive and that they significantly reduce economic and ecological risks. One of the potential risk-reduction drought-management tactics identified in the report is to lease grazing lands elsewhere.

The current drought management strategy on the DPG, for the most part, includes: 1) accelerating through the rotation, 2) delaying turnout or removing livestock, 3) reducing the herd by some percentage, or 4) some combination of the above.

Recommendation V – 4 of the Team’s report states: “Where possible, crested wheatgrass in native grasslands should be fenced separately, prescribed burned, or fertilized.” There are no current plans to use prescribed fire to treat crested wheatgrass pastures on the Little Missouri National Grasslands. A key issue for grassland managers wanting to use prescribed fire to restore or enhance grassland resources, is the difficulty of deferring or relocating livestock use to accomplish the project

If wildfire impacts an allotment significantly, grazing permittees are frequently asked to take their livestock off the pasture. Situations such as this may have significant economic and ecological impacts on operators and the land due to feed costs or substituting pastures not scheduled or ready for use.

In drought and wildfire situations, the Forest Service has limited options to help out affected ranchers because the entire national grassland land base is allocated to occupied grazing allotments. Overuse of allotments is unacceptable. Basically there is no capacity in the system to provide relief when beneficial management actions or emergency situations result in a needed reduction in grazing. The Elkhorn Ranchlands provide an opportunity for building some flexibility in the system. This flexibility would not only address the recommendations of the SRT but would also provide economic stability to those ranchers affected by these situations.

### **Protection and Restoration of Woody and Riparian Communities**

The SRT’s Report indicates historical records reveal only minor presence of woody plants on the northern Great Plains prior to settlement by Europeans and that many woody community types are now prevalent and increasing. Woody expansion is degrading and fragmenting grasslands into habitats unsuitable for endemic species. Expansion also affects livestock carrying capacity by decreasing herbaceous vegetation. Some increases in specific woody communities such as in riparian areas where cottonwoods are decreasing, however, is desirable.

The Report recommends that the DPG develop quantitative objectives for each woody community type and identify a range of patch sizes and distribution across the landscape for each type. The Report points out that fire, drought, and grazing by herbivores historically maintained diverse grasslands devoid of large stands of shrubs and trees. Uncontrolled grazing in riparian areas has had undesirable effects on the establishment and survival of cottonwood regeneration and other plant communities. Areas with developing cottonwood seedlings will need to be excluded from grazing by fencing or the pasture deferred until plants are firmly established and can withstand grazing.

The Report also indicates that properly timed prescribed burns at appropriate frequencies can reduce woody plants while properly timed prescribed grazing at appropriate frequencies is important to maintain the health of the herbaceous grasslands and help reduce some woody species. Without fire, most grazing systems eventually result in woody expansion on the northern Great Plains.

Rest from livestock grazing is sometimes recommended after both wild and prescribed fire. Rest or deferment before prescribed fire is sometimes recommended to build fuels to carry fire to achieve management objectives. Increased fuel in the understory of woody stands can create more heat and intensity, helping to meet mortality objectives.

The SRT report states current grazing tactics in riparian areas are inappropriate and good livestock distribution is the key to maintaining or improving riparian habitat health. Although no single approach will work for every situation, the Team recommended three major strategies: 1) attractants and herding, 2) fencing, and 3) rotation grazing systems that utilize proper timing, duration and intensity. Implementing any of the recommended practices or other strategies is difficult because the livestock grazing program currently has little flexibility to respond to these recommendations.

Implementation of restoration activities and decisions that respond to natural events are frequently met with resistance or simply difficult to do because the system has little, if any, flexibility built into it. Restoration processes may require: 1) rest before and after on-the-ground activities, or 2) immediate protection needed by regenerating cottonwoods. The newly acquired lands and associated national grasslands could provide management flexibility and help to mitigate economic and ecological concerns.

### **Eberts Ranch Acquisition**

The Eberts family ranched along the Little Missouri River in the Badlands of western North Dakota across from Theodore Roosevelt's historical Elkhorn Ranch site. Looking across the river, Roosevelt often wrote about the view from his veranda. Roosevelt claimed later in life that he never would have been president had it not been for his time in the Badlands. The Eberts unsuccessfully tried to sell their ranch initially to the National Park Service and then the state of North Dakota. The Forest Service became involved in the acquisition in the summer of 2005 and completed the acquisition in April of 2007.

The Forest Service approach to the acquisition included a “no net gain” of federal lands in North Dakota, maintaining traditional uses such as livestock grazing, oil and gas development, and hunting; honoring the recent road access decision through the Eberts Ranch, and retaining the animal unit months (AUMs) with the Medora Grazing Association.

The Forest Service appraised value of the ranch was \$4.8 million. Federal “yellow book” appraisals do not include or allow for valuation of AUMs allocated to public lands such as the national grasslands. These federal AUMs, however, frequently have a value in the market place and are reflected in sales between private parties. The conservation community determined the value of the Elkhorn Ranch federal AUMs in the market place to be roughly \$500,000, resulting in a total ranch value of \$5.3 million. The conservation community raised these additional funds for the acquisition as well as another \$500,000 for restoration, educational, and interpretive projects for the Elkhorn Ranchlands.

The two Little Missouri National Grasslands grazing allotments associated with the private land (commonly called base property) acquisition, provided forage for roughly 450 plus head of livestock for eight months annually (3,400 AUMs). The private ranch lands provided roughly 1,400 AUMs for a total of nearly 5,000 AUMs. Although the AUMs are permitted to the Medora Grazing Association and the association in turn issues grazing permits to its members, the individual members have historic “preference numbers” associated with their ranches and first priority for receipt of a new permit at the end of the term period. Term permits and grazing agreements frequently cover ten year periods.

Agency regulations allow the Forest Service to recognize, cooperate with, and assist local livestock associations in the management of the livestock and range resources on Federal lands. However, other laws and regulations such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act require the agency to engage the public when allocating resources or implementing land management activities.

### **Forest Service Livestock Grazing Direction and Policies**

The Record of Decision (ROD, 2002) for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands (DPG) Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) estimated an average nine percent reduction in grazing levels to achieve Grasslands Plan goals and objectives. Site specific management plans for each allotment, however, will be completed before any changes to livestock grazing levels occur. In his Decision, the Regional Forester also stated “Land acquisitions can provide greater flexibility in livestock management and provide “grassbanks” for use in times of drought, rest or need.” On some allotments, reductions are needed for alignment with carrying capacities. On others, restoration treatments and progressive grazing regimes may improve productivity, either eliminating or reducing the size of a reduction.

Forest Service Handbook (FSH 2209.13) states most cattle and some sheep allotments that become vacant should be evaluated for designation as a forage reserve allotment.

Forage reserve allotments (or grassbanks) are a designation of allotments on which there is no current term permit for some or all the estimated livestock grazing capacity and where there has been a determination made to use the available forage on the allotment to enhance management flexibility for authorized livestock use.

The Handbook also addresses the granting of available grazing capacity that is not obligated on vacant allotments. The following conditions need to be met:

- 1) The needs of other resources and values have been considered.
- 2) A current National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and decision has been made which meets LRMP direction and includes:
  - a. Determination of forage availability based on monitoring and/or inventories completed within the past five years.
  - b. Resolution of any conflicts between allocation of surplus forage and habitat requirements for wildlife species and habitat needs.
- 3) Rangeland improvements necessary for proper livestock management are in place.

Grants of available livestock grazing capacity shall be made based on the following factors in descending order:

- 1) To existing permittees on the allotment for their proportionate share of any increased grazing capacity resulting from range improvement or development programs to which they have contributed.
- 2) To existing permittees on the allotment for reductions they sustained during the previous ten years that resulted in the improvement of rangeland resource conditions.
- 3) To permittees on other Forest Service-administered allotments.
- 4) To new applicants who are eligible and qualified.

In light of the lack of flexibility during periods of drought, fire and restoration activities, the question before the Forest Service concerning the Elkhorn Ranchlands relates to the best use of the vacant acquired lands and associated national grasslands. Should the Forest Service grant the grazing capacity tied to these lands to a few individuals or maintain it as a grass reserve for all association members to allow for greater flexibility and use during times of need.

### **Summary**

The legislative record and federal regulations support multiple use management of the nation's national grasslands, including the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. No one use is predominant over other uses. The DPG Revised Grasslands Plan provides direction, goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and desired conditions for the day-to-day management of the grasslands. The Plan was developed with extensive public input and was affirmed by the Chief of the Forest Service and the USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. To implement the Plan, the agency makes site specific project decisions (i.e., to construct a trail or campground, to manage a grazing

allotment, to use prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuels, etc.), which are subject to the National Environmental Policy Act.

To move the grassland planning process forward, an independent Scientific Review Team was appointed to determine if the Plan could be implemented and if the effects were similar to agency estimates. The Team concluded, with qualifications, that the Plan could be implemented and the effects were similar to estimates. The Team highlighted a number of issues and included recommendations in their report. The Forest Service adopted the SRT's recommendations and addressed them in its final response to the report. It will be difficult, at best, for the agency to implement some SRT recommendations because of potential or perceived impacts to livestock grazers. There is simply little or no flexibility in the livestock grazing program on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. Changes in rotations, pasture deferment, rest, etc., cause impacts to livestock grazers and create a reluctance to support drought management measures or restoration activities.

The Forest Service completed the acquisition of the Eberts Ranch in April of 2007 and consistently stated that the future management direction for the ranch would be conducted through an open public process. Although the ranch and associated national grassland allotments are managed through a grazing agreement with the Medora Grazing Association, agency policy still applies. For all practical purposes, the ranch is considered a "vacant" allotment.

The agency has direction and policy for vacant allotments including the consideration of forage reserves (grassbanks) and granting processes for unallocated forage after the needs of other resources and values have been considered. Many stakeholders believe the Elkhorn Ranchlands could be a showcase for restoration activities and suggest the ranch be used as a grassbank, swing pasture, or commons area to improve ecological conditions.

### **Conclusions and Observations**

Grassland managers presently have little flexibility when confronted with natural disasters such as fire and drought, or needed activities to restore or improve grassland resources and health, except to reduce livestock numbers or send cows home. The present allocation system has limited flexibility and has created economic hardship and poor ecological conditions in places.

The question before the Forest Service is not about grazing the acquired lands and associated national grasslands, nor is it about who will retain the associated AUMs, rather the question is who will graze, when, and for what purpose. A key question will be: Should the allotments be reallocated to one or a few members, or be made available for use by all members in time of drought, fire, or needed rest or restoration of their own allotments? The public acquisition of the Elkhorn Ranchlands provides the opportunity for flexibility not only for the grazing program within the boundaries of the grazing

association, but for a number of natural resource programs on the Little Missouri National Grassland.

The USDA-Forest Service acquisition of Theodore Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranchlands could provide multiple opportunities to an array of stakeholders – public and private. Rather than resolving the future management of the area through political or legislative fixes, or protracted legal battles, I would rather use a collaborative environmental conflict resolution model to find a solution. Several are being used successfully throughout the nation to resolve complex natural resource issues. Examples include The Quincy Library Group addressing forest management issues in California, the Valle Grande Grassbank in New Mexico exchanging forage for conservation to conserve working landscapes, and the 850 strong Quivira Coalition developed a concept called “the New Ranch” based on the radical notion that good ecology, good ranching and good business go together.

There are many collaborative processes and conflict resolution models on the landscape. There's no ironclad prescription for success but some factors such as 1) encouraging broad participation, 2) understanding divergent viewpoints, 3) communicating needs versus wants, and 4) looking for common ground to build trust can improve the probability. Collaboration should be inclusive; all stakeholders should have the opportunity to participate and influence the outcome.

In a speech to the 67<sup>th</sup> North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference titled “Federally Owned Rangelands: Are There New Grounds for Common Ground?”, Under Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey talked about the importance of initiatives that “keep private ranchlands in ranch family hands and out of developers' plans” if we want to maintain the heritage of the West and conserve native species. He contrasted the range wars of old to today's - less violent but equally passionate. He closed by asking the group to endorse the idea of a grassbank.

### **Recommendations**

So, where do we go from here? The Forest Service would like to capitalize on the flexibility the acquisition provides to use the lands as a forage reserve, or grassbank, or commons area available to all grazing association members to meet the following objectives: 1) to provide forage during drought and after fire, 2) to implement restoration activities, 3) to meet the needs of other resources and values, and 4) to alleviate or reduce economic hardship by providing an alternative to taking cattle home or to the sale barn. As a minimum the Forest Service recommends a pilot or demonstration project to include all interested stakeholders to develop an approach.

The conservation community, the public, livestock grazers, and other agencies have a major stake in the future of the Elkhorn Ranchlands. Should all stakeholders sit at the table, collaborate and attempt resolution? Or, should it be “business as usual” and let the range wars continue in the great tradition of the American West?

I would like to hear your thoughts and ideas on future uses of the Elkhorn Ranchlands including alternative approaches to take advantage of the flexibility the acquisition provides. We have a rare opportunity to benefit the unique natural resources and users of the Little Missouri National Grassland. I am excited about the prospect. Please write, call, or send me an e-mail with any constructive ideas you may have concerning future management of the Elkhorn Ranchlands.

Dave Pieper  
Dakota Prairie Grasslands Supervisor

240 W. Century  
Bismarck, ND 58503

701-250-4463

[dpieper@fs.fed.us](mailto:dpieper@fs.fed.us)