

File Code: 1950/2310

Date: August 22, 2005

Dear Interested Party

### REQUEST FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT

Enclosed is a copy of the Crazy Allotment Environmental Assessment (EA) for your review and comment. This EA addresses the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of proposed livestock grazing on the Crazy Allotment, which is located approximately 15 miles northwest of Big Timber, Montana. The allotment is located in Sweetgrass County T3N, RI IE, Sections or portions of Sections 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, and 30; T3N, RI 2E, Sections or portions of Sections 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, and 24; T4N, R12E, Sections or portions of Sections 1, 2, and 3.

The Big Timber Ranger District, Gallatin National Forest, is proposing to reauthorize a grazing permit on Crazy Allotment. The proposal would continue grazing on suitable range within the allotment with reduced livestock numbers and would continue with the current season of use, while incorporating Forest Plan and Adaptive Management direction into the Allotment Management Plan. The proposed modifications in the allotment management are designed to keep livestock numbers within the carrying capacity of the suitable land in order to improve vegetative and riparian conditions and bring the allotment into compliance with the Gallatin Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), as well as other legal requirements. This analysis is being prepared to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, and the Gallatin National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1987). The information and analysis in this document will be used to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) (40 CFR 1508.9).

Per the requirements of 36 CFR 215, we will be accepting comments on the Crazy Allotment EA until 30 days after publication of the legal notice in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Bozeman, Montana.

Based on field reconnaissance and the analysis presented in the EA, the Forest Service preferred alternative is Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, incorporating Adaptive Management.

With the Proposed Action, grazing on the allotment may continue at the carrying capacity level of 312 cow/calf pairs, as long as utilization and properly functioning conditions of the creeks are moving toward or meeting desired future conditions. Livestock will not be allowed on the allotment until July 1<sup>st</sup>, which at this elevation is following seed production for most grasses and herbaceous species and following the wet season when soils are more easily compacted.

The length of time allowed for grazing on the allotment will depend upon how well individual resource objectives are met. The grazing permit and allotment management plan would be

revised to incorporate Forest Plan forage utilization standards for livestock grazing and Adaptive Management requirements. The Forest Plan standards allow no more than 40% utilization of forage in riparian areas in fair condition and no more than 55% utilization in the upland vegetative communities. Adaptive Management actions will be based on monitoring data.

Monitoring will occur over time, with evaluations of the results being used by the Interdisciplinary Team and the Line Officer to make adjustments to management as needed. This will ensure adequate progress toward desired resource and properly functioning conditions.

This proposal is designed to alleviate riparian and upland grazing problems, overstocking, and distribution problems, while still meeting the perceived needs of the permittee. Some of the problems on the allotment derive from factors other than grazing or from combinations of factors including grazing. This proposal will only modify factors relating to grazing, thus not all problems on the allotment area can be corrected by this proposal.

Implementation of the Proposed Action will occur through the incorporation of the selected alternative into an allotment management plan (AMP) specific to the allotment. Monitoring methods, as defined in the U.S. Forest Service Region 2 Rangeland Analysis and Management guide, will be specified in the allotment management plan.

Comments on the Crazy Allotment EA are requested from you and other reviewers. The Forest Service 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 by 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 maps is available for viewing and downloading on the Gallatin NF website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/rl/gallatin>. To request a paper copy of the EA contact Barbara Ping by phone at (406) 522-2570, or by mail at Forest Ecology Group; 3710 Fallon Street, Suite C; Bozeman, MT 59718, or by email to Barbara Ping at [being@fs.fed.us](mailto:being@fs.fed.us).

Send written comments to:  
Barbara Ping, Writer/Editor  
Crazy Allotment EA  
Forest Ecology Group, Bozeman Ranger District  
3710 Fallon Street, Suite C; Bozeman, MT 59718  
Business hours are Mon- Fri, 0800-1630

Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, faxed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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-alg~~ [latin@fs.fed.us](mailto:latin@fs.fed.us). ~~Insert~~ Crazy Allotment EA in the subject line. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from 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.

According to 36 CFR 215, for a person to appeal they must meet the following criteria prior to decision: 1) have submitted comments in response to an EA subject to review, or 2) have provided comment or otherwise expressed interest in a particular proposed action by the close of the comment period. If you have not previously shown interest in this project, you must show interest by the end of the 30-day comment period to ensure your ability to challenge any Forest Service decisions regarding this proposal.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Parts 215 or 217 (if applicable). Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and to whom the request may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 15 days.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Barbara Ping at the above address or call her at (406) 522-2558.

Sincerely,



BILL AVEY  
District Ranger

Enclosure