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Intermountain Region

**Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest**

**Santa Rosa
Ranger District**

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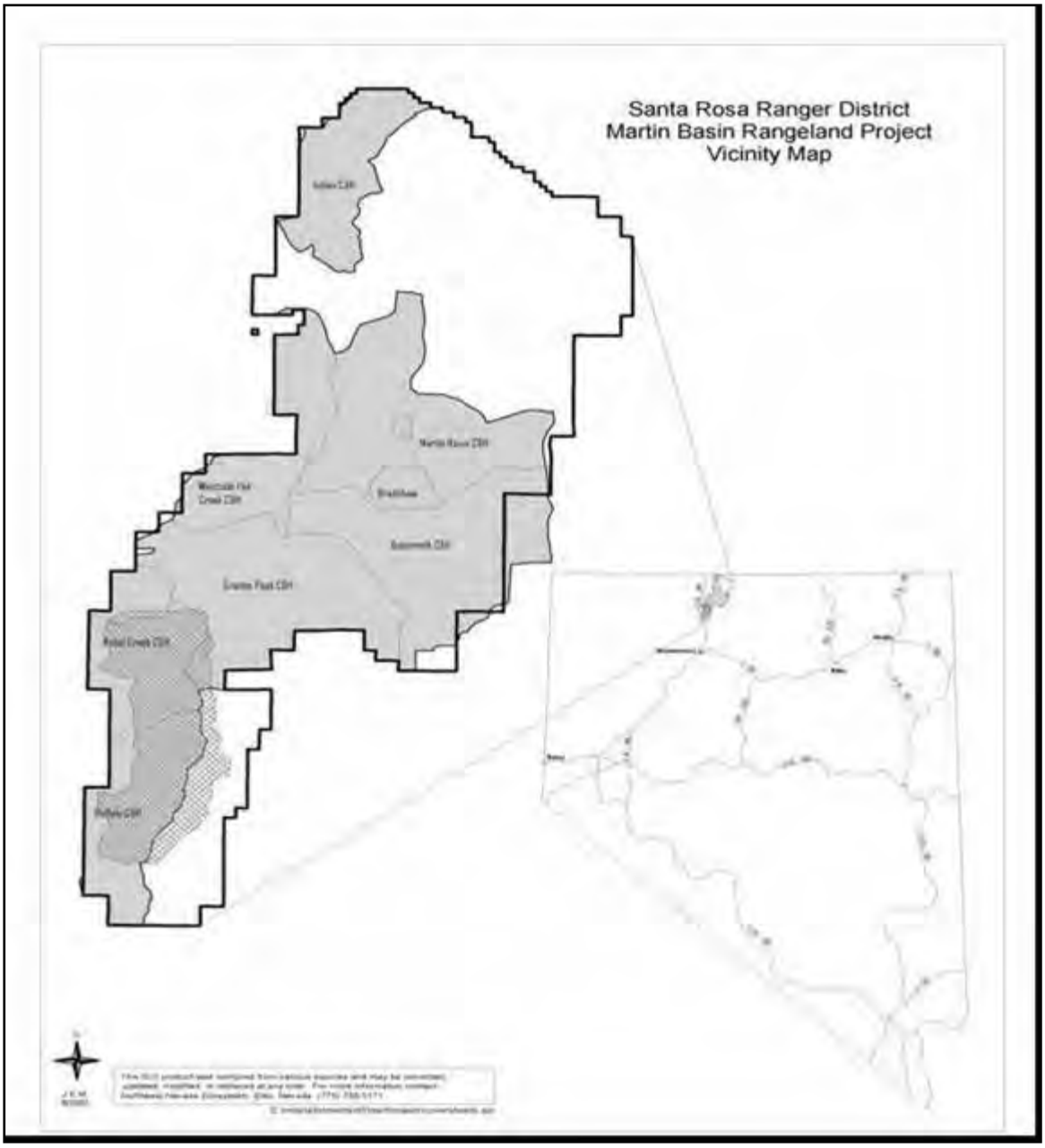
MARTIN BASIN RANGELAND PROJECT

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Map 1. Vicinity - Martin Basin Rangeland Project Area.



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MARTIN BASIN RANGELAND PROJECT

Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Santa Rosa Ranger District

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Abstract: The Martin Basin Rangeland Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement discloses the effects of reauthorizing grazing on eight existing cattle and horse allotments. Three alternatives have been analyzed in detail. Under Alternative 1, grazing would continue in the project area under the guidance of Amendment 2 of the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (US Forest Service 1986). Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) would reauthorize grazing using a more ecologically sustainable grazing system. Alternative 3 (No Grazing/No Action) would eliminate livestock grazing in the Martin Basin Rangeland Project Area. Alternative 2 has been identified as the Forest Service's Preferred Alternative.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such a way that they are useful to the Agency's preparation of the environmental impact statement (EIS). Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent administrative review or judicial review.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to participate in subsequent administrative review or judicial review.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Project Area

The Martin Basin Rangeland Project is located on the Santa Rosa Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The project area encompasses approximately 190,000 acres and is located in portions of Townships 41 through 47 North and Ranges 38 through 41 East, Mount Diablo Meridian (see Map 1). The area ranges in elevation from 5,000 to 9,700 feet and contains numerous sub-watersheds flowing down from both sides of the north-south oriented Santa Rosa Mountain Range. The east side of the project area flows into the North Fork Little Humboldt River and the west side of the project area flows into the Quinn River.

The project area contains two distinct landscapes. The southern half is characterized by steep terrain incised by canyons along both the east and west side of a backbone type mountain range. The north half is more of a broad basin interspersed by numerous streams.

Vegetation is varied within the project area. Around the perimeter of the area at elevations below 6,000 feet, the predominant vegetation community is Wyoming big sagebrush. As the elevation increases, the vegetation changes to mountain big sagebrush and mountain brush communities. Interspersed among these communities are numerous large stands of aspen. Pockets of curl-leaf mountain mahogany and some isolated stands of limber pine are also present.

Private lands within the boundaries of the Santa Rosa Ranger District, which have been purchased by the Forest Service, are found within the project area and have been considered in this analysis. Those lands include the Nevada First properties and the Rebel Creek properties.

Portions of the Buttermilk Allotment and several other allotments are located on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Bureau of Land Management has authorized grazing on these lands. Through a cooperative agreement with BLM, the Forest Service administers grazing on these lands under BLM's authority and standards. These BLM lands are not part of the project area and will not be analyzed in this document.

The Martin Basin Rangeland Project includes eight cattle and horse allotments: the Bradshaw, Buffalo, Buttermilk, Granite Peak, Indian, Martin Basin, Rebel Creek, and West Side Flat Creek Allotments. These allotments currently have permitted grazing use with the exception of the Bradshaw and Rebel Creek Allotments, which are vacant.

Prior to the establishment of the Santa Rosa National Forest in 1911 (now the Santa Rosa Ranger District), there were approximately 16,000 head of cattle, 1,500 horses, and 150,000 sheep grazing on the Santa Rosa Mountain Range. The Forest Service began management of this area in 1911 largely because of local rancher petitions. These petitions sought to reduce the level of grazing, particularly by sheep, on the Santa Rosa Mountain Range. Permitted livestock grazing was authorized on the Santa Rosa Ranger District in 1912, at which time permits were issued for approximately 14,600 head of cattle, 1,000 horses, and 71,600 sheep.

Currently 17 permittees graze 10,087 head of cattle and 25 horses on the Santa Rosa Ranger District. Of these, 12 permittees have permits to graze 5,305 head of cattle and 25 horses within the project area. The grazing season is generally from May 21 through September 30. There are no permits to graze sheep on the District.

History of the Analysis

In 1995, Congress passed Public Law 104-19, commonly known as the Rescissions Act. This Act directed the Forest Service to develop and implement a schedule for completing environmental analyses under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on all grazing allotments.

In response to the Rescissions Act, the Santa Rosa Ranger District published a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Martin Basin Rangeland Project in the Federal Register in December 2002. The EIS would analyze the effects of reauthorizing continued livestock grazing within the area.

The Martin Basin Rangeland Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was released in June 2005. The Record of Decision was signed in June 2006 and appealed in July 2006. Following an appeal review, the Regional Forester remanded the decision back to the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest for additional analysis.

In February 2007, a Notice of Intent to prepare a supplemental EIS was published in the Federal Register. Subsequently, it was determined that a new EIS would be prepared. A corrected Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register in October 2008 informing the public of the decision to prepare a new analysis.