



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

April 21, 2006

Gene Waldrip
Mormon Lake Ranger District
5075 N. U.S. Highway 89
Flagstaff, AZ 86004

Subject: EPA Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the
Deep Lake Allotment (CEQ# 60074)

Dear Mr. Waldrip:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The proposed project would re-authorize grazing on the Deep Lake Allotment, which includes approximately 10,994 acres of land. The DEIS acknowledges that during scoping, concerns were raised regarding both the impacts to the unfenced portion of Deep Lake as well as the proposed cattle numbers, utilization levels, and season of use. The DEIS recognizes that within the Deep Lake Allotment, cattle have contributed to 213 acres of impaired soil conditions (p. 64). To reduce the impacts of grazing on wetlands in the allotment as well as address public scoping comments, the Forest Service has proposed the expansion of a wetland enclosure around Deep Lake as well as an expansion of the enclosure around Horse Lake. The proposed alternative, Alternative 4, will also prohibit salting in Unit 436, reducing the impacts to microphytic crusts. Therefore, we have rated the proposed action as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "Summary of Rating Definitions").

However, we note that Alternative 5, with a reduced utilization level, would further reduce some impacts to soils in the uplands (p. 36). The FEIS should evaluate the reasons that the Forest Service is unable to proceed with Alternative 5. The FEIS should estimate if selection of Alternative 5 is economically feasible for the allotment permittees. If it is feasible, EPA recommends selection of this alternative.

The FEIS should include information on funding for the proposed monitoring measures listed in Chapter 4. These measures will be especially important to address potentially substantial impacts as a result of drought (as referenced on p. 173 of the DEIS) and help avoid impacts of grazing on the overall system. In addition, environmental review for two large

Allotment Management Plans (AMPs), the Walnut Canyon AMP and the Angell AMP, is upcoming in the next year. These plans will address grazing management on over 95,000 acres adjacent to Deep Lake. Funding commitments for monitoring associated with each of these plans should be included in the associated NEPA documents for these projects.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. Please send one copy of the Final EIS to the address above (Mail Code: CED-2) at the same time it is officially filed with EPA Headquarters. If you have any questions, please call me at (415) 972-3988 or Summer Allen, the project reviewer, at (415) 972-3847.

Sincerely,

/S/

Duane James, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Main ID# 4511

Enclosures: Summary of Rating Definitions