



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

South Dakota Chapter

523 E. Capital Ave.

Pierre, SD

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September 30, 2020

Fort Pierre National Grassland, Attn: Rubin Mares
1020 N. Deadwood Street
Ft. Pierre, SD 57532

Subject: Scoping Comments: Prairie Restoration Research Proposal

Dear Mr. Mares:

Thank you for this opportunity to engage and provide input on the proposed prairie restoration project on the Fort Pierre National Grassland. As indicated in previous correspondence with your office, members of the South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society (SDTWS) are concerned about the loss of grassland-resource values and biodiversity in our state and on FPNG caused by invasion of cool-season exotics, including smooth brome and bluegrass. We commend you and the Central South Dakota Cooperative Grazing District for proposing this research project.

At this early planning stage, we offer the following scoping comments in support of your proposal:

Comment #1 – New Information

Your scoping letter indicated that you have been conducting an extensive review of the relevant scientific literature on the difficulties in controlling invasive cool-season exotics. We suspect you are already aware of the following recent dissertation, but just to make sure, we include it as a possible source of new and highly-relevant information:

Preister, L. 2018. Smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) phenology in the northern tallgrass prairie. Dissertation, North Dakota State University, Fargo. 110pp.

Comment #2 – Potential Partnerships and Collaboration

We know that prairie restoration efforts can be costly, especially when tillage and reseeding are involved. The expense for native grass and forb seed can be especially high for both high and moderate-diversity seed mixes. The issues associated with trying to find locally-adapted seeds add to the complexities and difficulties of putting a meaningful prairie restoration program on the

ground. SDTWS wants to encourage the Forest Service and Grazing District to continue reaching out to other organizations and agencies to bring additional financial resources and expertise to FPNG to support this proposal and possibly an expanded prairie restoration program in the future. We contend that prairie restoration on FPNG can and will be a common vision shared by many interests. We also hope that there will be demonstration field trips in the future for interested publics and cooperators to view and discuss the effectiveness of different restoration protocols.

Comment #3 – Management Flexibility

We understand that FPNG is a working landscape supporting livestock production, outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat and other critical environmental services. We also understand that prairie restoration can typically involve multiple land management practices including targeted grazing, mowing, spraying, tillage and reseeding on each restoration area over a period of years. SDTWS suggests that the Forest Service identify and evaluate viable options for providing the management flexibility needed to adjust and accommodate livestock grazing during restoration efforts. This could include options like forage reserves to accommodate displaced livestock.

Comment #4 – Monitoring Plan

SDTWS encourages the Forest Service and Grazing District to develop, as part of this research project, a monitoring plan that includes criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the different restoration protocols. The monitoring plan could also address how successful prairie restoration could be used to meet specific management direction and guidance in the current Land and Resource Management Plan and Range Allotment Management Plan for FPNG.

Thank you again for bringing this proposal to our attention. SDTWS wishes to remain engaged as this proposal moves forward, hopefully to full implementation on the ground in the near future.

Sincerely,



Casey Heimerl
SDTWS Chapter President