



# NEWS RELEASE

**Nebraska National Forest**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Decisions Issued for Grassland and Forest Management Plans**

**CHADRON, NE** (August 1, 2002) – Rick Cables, Rocky Mountain Regional Forester, has made his decision on future management of national grasslands and forests in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Cables has selected Alternative 3 Final, which was described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement issued in July 2001, with some modifications. Cables has signed two Records of Decisions—one for the Nebraska National Forest and associated units, and one for Thunder Basin National Grassland.

Electronic copies of the decisions and addendum are available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ngp>. Local libraries, Forest Service and other government offices should have printed documents by August 14, 2002.

“I appreciate the patience people have shown in staying with us through this lengthy process,” said Cables. “We have encouraged the involvement of people throughout the process, and I know people have expended considerable time and effort to provide their comments to us,” Cables added.

At the same time as Cables made his decision, Northern Regional Forester, Brad Powell, in Missoula, Montana, signed a Record of Decision for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands.

The decisions for the three revised plans are part of the Northern Great Plains plan revision process. Nearly three million acres of national grasslands and forests across the Northern Great Plains were included in the combined planning effort. This combined approach achieved efficiencies and economies when dealing with common issues. The effort also allowed for consideration of local differences and unique local needs in the development of each plan.

Over 26,000 people responded with comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised plans during the seven-month comment period that began when the draft documents were released in July 1999. Another 48,000 cards and letters were received in response to the July 2001, release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

According to Cables, “The revised management plans are living documents. Our work with the public is only beginning. We will be working together as we implement the plans.”

The decisions are subject to administrative review. Appeals to the decision must be fully consistent with 36 Code of Federal Regulations 217.9 and must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service within 90 days of the legal notice -- scheduled for publication in the *Denver Post* August 14, 2002. Appeals should be sent to the following address:

USDA Forest Service  
Attn: NFS-EMC Staff, Stop Code 1104  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1104.

The legal notice will be published in the official newspaper of record for Regional Forester decisions, which is the *Denver Post*, on August 14, 2002. The legal notice will also be published as a courtesy in those newspapers of record for Forest Supervisor and District Ranger decisions. Those newspapers are: The *Omaha World Herald*, *North Platte Telegraph*, and *Chadron Record* in Nebraska, and the *Rapid City Journal* and *Capitol Journal* in South Dakota.

#### **EDITOR’S NOTE:**

**Forest Supervisor Don Bright will be available to take calls regarding the Nebraska National Forest and Associated Units Revised Management Plan on August 1, between 1-5 pm and on August 2, between 10 am and 2 pm at 308-432-0300.**

#### **The revised management plans will:**

- Create rural economic development opportunities through a balanced program of sustainable multiple uses: livestock grazing; oil, gas, and mineral production, and options for growth in recreation tourism.
- Provide diverse grassland landscapes to benefit wildlife, soil, water, scenery and provide unique recreational settings and experiences.
- Manage for the conservation of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, including meeting national black-footed ferret recovery objectives and prairie dog strategies.
- Conserve outstanding features by applying special designations and management prescriptions such as suitable wilderness, research natural areas, and special interest areas.

#### **Highlights of the decision for the 1.1-million-acre Nebraska National Forest and associated units (Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest, Buffalo Gap, Fort Pierre, Oglala National Grasslands) include:**

- 38,710 acres on two areas are recommended for Congress to consider for wilderness in South Dakota—Indian Creek and Red Shirt—located on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland.
- 969,860 acres are suitable for livestock grazing.

- 104,030 acres are allocated to Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Habitat.
- 104,785 acres will emphasize Special Plant and Wildlife Habitats.
- 5 Research Natural Areas will include 6,740 acres.
- 187,390 acres are available for oil and gas leasing.
- 30,280 acres will feature 13 Special Interest Areas.
- 5,650 acres will feature Bighorn Sheep Habitat.

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