

Grazing/Rangeland Health/Weeds

Helena and Lewis & Clark National Forests, Forest Plan Revision

Overview

While rangeland provides a variety of ecosystem services, such as wildlife habitat, recreation (including that associated with wildlife), watershed functions, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity conservation, these lands have primarily been managed for forage. Livestock grazing is permitted on designated allotments with the Forests. Invasive plants have been aggressive and are spreading across the landscape.



What's Changed Since 1986?

- Species composition and overall health of rangelands have changed throughout the planning area.
- Livestock grazing may have affected the ecological status on 45% of National Forest System lands in the plan area.
- Both forests have decisions in place as to how to treat noxious weeds.
- The Forest Service adopted new guidelines for invasive species management in 2011 in the form of a new Forest Service Manual (FSM 2900).

What Needs to Change in the Forest Plan?

- Include plan components providing direction on the future development of an adaptive and systematic approach to noxious weed management.
- Incorporate target noxious weed species by reference only. The plan should refer to the Montana State Noxious weed list.
- Revise existing plan components that discuss management of rangeland vegetation communities.
- Include plan components on the management of rangeland ecosystems with a discussion on desired conditions in relation to site potential.
- Provide criteria on rangeland restoration techniques in relation to seed mix/plant species selection based on site specific information.
- Provide overarching criteria-based guidance related to the determination of areas that are suitable and capable for livestock grazing.
- Provide direction on conducting carrying capacity analysis through future AMPs.

