



# News Release

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## **Lincoln National Forest Officials Seek to Preserve Grazing While Protecting Endangered Mouse Habitat**

**Alamogordo, NM; August 26, 2014** - Representatives from the Lincoln National Forest, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Otero County Cattleman's Association, Congressman Steve Pearce's staff, N.M. Representative Yvette Herrell, Farm Bureau, N.M. Department of Agriculture, New Mexico Cattle Growers President Jose Varela Lopez, Otero County Grazing Advisory Board Members and the Range Improvement Task Force met with permitted livestock producers on August 25, 2014 to discuss ways to sustain grazing operations on the Lincoln National Forest while still protecting habitat for the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. This meeting was the continuation of previous joint conversation held between the groups.

"I realize tensions are running high and trust in the Forest Service is compromised, but we continue to have respectful and productive dialogue that is foundational to long term solutions," said Travis Moseley, Forest Supervisor.

The New Mexico meadow jumping mouse was listed as an endangered species in June 2014. The Forest Service is mandated by law to protect the endangered mouse and the habitat it occupies. The mouse lives in lush riparian areas, and is only active four months each year where riparian vegetation provides food and shelter. This specific habitat exists in several active grazing allotments on the Lincoln National Forest on the Sacramento Ranger District.

In May the Forest Service finished replacing a pre-existing fence on the Agua Chiquita to protect riparian habitat and species, including the meadow jumping mouse habitat; however ranchers strongly contended

that doing so infringed on water rights even though livestock watering points were provided in the fencing design. Since that time additional electric fencing was erected to avoid harm to additional riparian habitat where the meadow jumping mouse is known to exist in Wills Canyon. The group went to the field and had a robust discussion to identify alternatives to meet the needs of the ranchers while protecting the mouse. While there were not specific alternatives suggested for individual sites where the meadow mouse occurs, there was good discussion about livestock producer needs, meadow jumping mouse needs and the possibility of achieving mutual objectives. No decision has been reached and further consideration of options is needed. There were agreements made on meeting with the Forest Service to address site specifics and together develop proposals.

Mr. Moseley stated, “This meeting was an important step to improve communications with the permittees and seek common ground on grazing management while still protecting endangered species on the forest. We are trying our best to build mutual commitment to keeping cattle on the landscape while protecting and promoting recovery of the endangered meadow mouse.”

The Forest Service plans to meet with affected permittees to continue the discussion and working in cooperation with one another.

For more information please visit the Forest Service Southwestern Region New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse webpage at <http://prdp2fs.ess.usda.gov/detail/r3/home/?cid=stelprd3809047>.



**CAPTION: Meeting attendees discuss ways to sustain grazing operations on the Lincoln National Forest while still protecting habitat for the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse.**

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