
File Code: 1950
Date: June 14, 2018

Designated Opportunity to Comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse Habitat Improvement Projects on the Sacramento Grazing Allotment

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

The Forest Service, Lincoln National Forest, has prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) for the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse Habitat Improvement Projects on the Sacramento Grazing Allotment in Otero County, New Mexico. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius luteus*) as an endangered species pursuant to the Endangered Species Act in June 2014. The critical habitat for the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (NMMJM) was designated in March, 2016. The purpose of this proposal is to protect and improve the NMMJM critical habitat within the Sacramento Grazing Allotment by reducing impacts such as grazing and recreation, which decrease the cover and food essential for the continued survival of the species, while continuing to allow for livestock grazing (see Figure 1).

The draft EA compares the environmental effects of implementing two alternatives: 1) No Action, and 2) Proposed Action. The draft EA and supporting documentation is available on the project website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=51153> under the analysis tab. Hard copies are also available upon request at the Sacramento Ranger District Office at #4 Lost Lodge Rd. in Cloudcroft, New Mexico. You may also obtain additional information about this project by contacting Aurora Roemmich, NEPA Coordinator, at 575-434-7200 or at auroraroemmich@fs.fed.us.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lincoln National Forest is proposing to replace temporary enclosure fencing that was completed for the 2016, 2017 and 2018 grazing seasons with permanent enclosure fencing with modifications, construct additional livestock handling facilities, and to develop additional water for livestock and wildlife within the Sacramento Grazing Allotment to reduce impacts on critical habitat for the NMMJM. A closure order for enclosures fenced with electric fencing would be included as part of the proposal to protect human health and safety, by reducing the risk of electric shock to forest users. The closure order would be lifted when the electric fence gets replaced by permanent fence. The project is expected to be implemented in phases over several years. Full details of the proposed action are available in the draft EA.

HOW TO COMMENT

This solicitation serves as a designated opportunity for public comment. The Forest Service encourages your review of the draft EA. It is important that reviewers provide timely, specific written comments within the scope of the proposed action, that have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and that include supporting reasons for the responsible official (Elizabeth



Humphrey, Sacramento District Ranger) to consider (36 CFR 218.2) in preparing the final EA.

Specific written comments (36 CFR 218.2) on the proposed project will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of the official notice in the Alamogordo Daily News, i.e., the newspaper of record for the Sacramento Ranger District, which is expected on June 20, 2018. If the comment period ends on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, comments will be accepted until the end of the next Federal working day. The publication date in the Alamogordo Daily News is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Failing to submit timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent administrative or judicial review. All oral comments and any written comments submitted outside this or another designated opportunity for public comment will be considered but will not establish objection eligibility.

Other requirements to be eligible to submit an objection are defined by 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(3) and include name, postal address, title of the project (NMMJM Sacramento EA), and verification of identity of the individual or entity who authored the comments upon request. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments in order to have eligibility to object as an individual. A timely submission will be determined as outlined in 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(4). It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted.

Anyone submitting comments are asked to provide their name and postal mailing address so that they can be added to the project mailing list. Input received in response to this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the requester is denied; the agency will return the submission and notify the requestor that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within seven days. Comments submitted anonymously will be considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Specific written comments including attachments may be submitted by email in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), hypertext markup language (.html), or portable document format (.pdf) to: comments-southwestern-lincoln-sacramento@fs.fed.us and include "**NMMJM Sacramento EA**" in the subject line. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

Written comments may also be faxed to 575.682.3394, or submitted by mail or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00a.m. to 4:00p.m., excluding holidays) to:

Elizabeth Humphrey, District Ranger
NMMJM Sacramento EA
Sacramento Ranger District
#4 Lost Lodge Rd.
Cloudcroft, NM 88317

NEXT STEPS

After comments are fully considered, the EA will be finalized and a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and draft decision document (decision notice) will be prepared. The final EA, FONSI, and draft decision are subject to the predecisional administrative review process (objection process) pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. The responsible official, will notify those that previously commented of the opportunity to object on the final EA, FONSI, and draft decision.

Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding this proposed project during a designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with 36 CFR 218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted, timely, specifically written comments regarding this proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

Thank you for your interest in the Lincoln National Forest.

Sincerely,



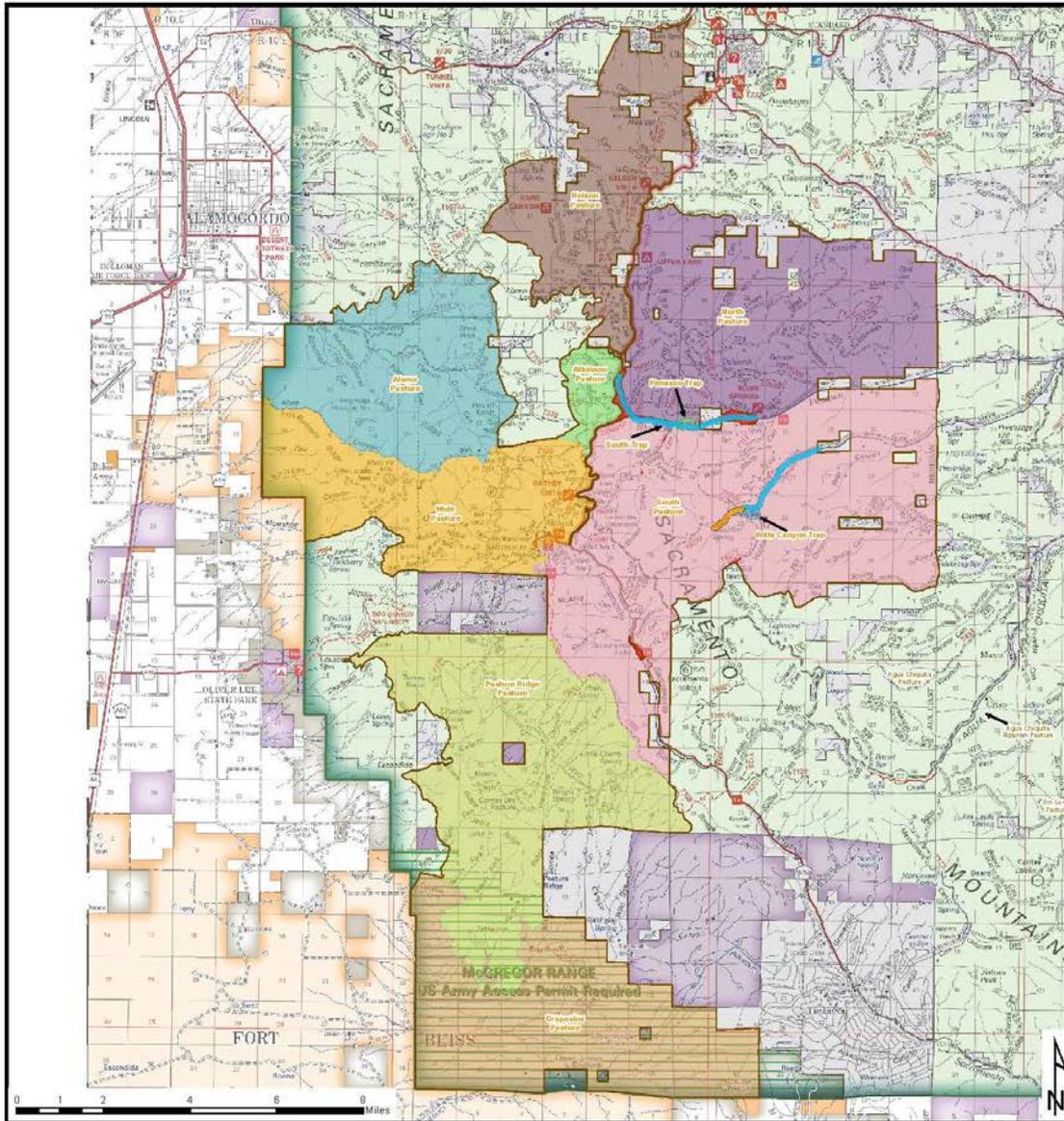
ELIZABETH A. HUMPHREY
District Ranger

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**Lincoln National Forest
Sacramento
Ranger District**

**New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse
Habitat Improvement Project Area
Sacramento Allotment**

**District
Vicinity Map**

Legend

- Allotment Boundary
- NMMJM Critical Habitat**
- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- Exclosure - No Grazing
- Surface Ownership**
- National Forest System Land
- Non-National Forest System Land

Produced on 15 November 2016 - GIS



Figure 1. Sacramento Grazing Allotment with pastures and the NMMJM critical habitat displayed.

