



File Code: 1570

Date: February 4, 2015

Mr. Brian B. Bremner
Garfield County Engineer/Public Lands Coordinator
55 South Main
P. O. Box 77
Panguitch, UT 84759

Dear Mr. Bremner:

This letter serves to acknowledge receipt of your data quality challenge and request for correction of information disseminated by the Forest Service regarding Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests.

Your data challenges and requests for correction, postmarked December 19, 2014, but formally received on January 5, 2015 have been forwarded to the appropriate staffs within the agency for further review. You can expect a response no later than March 5, 2015.

If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Parker, Data Quality Officer at 703-605-5257 or sparker01@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

DAINA APPLE
Director, Knowledge Management and Communications

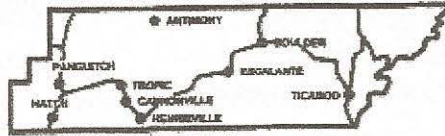
cc: Sharon Parker, Ralph E. Giffen



County Commissioners

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Auditor/Clerk

GARFIELD COUNTY



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December 16, 2014

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Mr. Tom Tidwell
USDA Forest Service
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RE: Data Quality Act Complaint and Request for Correction,
*Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems
of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014*

Dear Sirs / Madams:

This correspondence constitutes a formal challenge by Garfield County, Utah for Retraction of Data and Information used to compile and disseminate the *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014* (the *Review*) as referenced in the Federal Register notice initiating a Forest Plan Assessment Process for Grazing Within the Three National Forests, 79 FR 159, p. 48721. The Challenge is submitted under USDA's Information Quality Guidelines and pursuant to the Federal Information Quality Act (44 U.S.C. §3516) which ensures maximum Quality, Utility, and Integrity of information disseminated by Federal Agencies. Garfield County respectfully demands a full rescission of the document. The *Review* fails to meet vital information quality guidelines set forth in the Data Quality Act, particularly those requiring federal agencies to maximize the utility and objectivity of influential information. The *Review* falls severely short of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), U.S. Department of Agriculture and National

Forest Service data quality guidelines, which dictate that the Forest Service produce information that is objective, useful, and transparent. Forest Service use of the document as an influential source from which to base decisions can only lead to flawed actions because the document is faulty.

Furthermore, Garfield County respectfully demands: a) Immediate government to government coordination in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA); b) Forest health management actions including timber management of the Dixie National Forest be brought into consistency with adopted plans, programs and policies as outlined in the 1986 Forest Management Plan and subsequent modifications; c) an immediate halt to the Dixie, Fishlake, and Manti-La Sal National Forests' assessment of current forest plan direction for managing livestock grazing as it relates to specific ecological conditions in riparian, aquatic, and sagebrush-grassland ecosystems, and d) an immediate halt to collusive activities with selected special interests that violate the Federal Advisory Committee Act and are inconsistent with federal law.

If the Forest Service is unable to achieve consistency with its current plans, programs and policies, we ask that the Forest Service detail why they are unable to comply with their own forest management plan, identify conflicts between their own plan and their current actions, list efforts made to resolve the conflicts, and list the reasons why resolution is impossible. We also request that detailed cost analysis comparing full cost estimates for the proposed NEPA action with implementation of projects that could be authorized under the existing forest plan, and a socio-economic analysis of impacts to Garfield County's health, safety, welfare, custom, culture, and heritage resulting from each option. We also request a detailed environmental benefit analysis for each of the alternatives and appropriate analysis under the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

This request is made in the spirit of cooperation and pursuant to the Data Quality Act (or Information Quality Act as it is known by some agency personnel) by which Congress ordered the Office of Management of Budget to require that every federal agency prepare a process for verifying the quality of data at the request of a local government or citizen as outlined in USDA's Information Quality Guidelines. It is also made pursuant to the Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980 by which Congress directed federal agencies to prepare analyses and certifications considering the economic and social impacts of decisions on small businesses, organizations and governmental entities. Additionally, it made under the provisions of NEPA, CEQ regulations and NFMA which require federal agencies to coordinate their plans with local governments and bring them into consistency with local plans to the maximum extent allowed by law.

REQUESTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

The contact for this Data Quality Act challenge is Brian Bremner, Garfield County Engineer / Public Lands Coordinator, 55 South Main, P.O. Box 77, Panguitch, Utah 84759, Phone: (435) 676-1119, Cell: (435) 690-1050, Fax: (435) 676-8239, email: engineer@color-country.net

USDA's Information Quality Guidelines

The Department of Agriculture and the National Forest Service have regulatory guidelines and procedures established under the Data Quality Act. It is also believed that each level of government has a data quality officer included above. If submitted to the wrong person, please submit this request to that officer at once to speed up this process.

In addition to the formal evaluation of this challenge, we anticipate and respectfully request that local review of data quality be done in conference with our governing board and/or its designated representative; for convenience, we will agree that the review can take place at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Garfield County Commission, preferably prior to January 31, 2015.

We hope to avoid a general oversimplification that the technical and objective scientific analysis associated with the *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014* was a matter of "professional opinion" or that material, data and information was evaluated under the Act simply by "peer review." We specifically desire documented evidence that data, methodologies, assumptions, limitations, uncertainty, computations, and constraints meet USDA guidelines; and, in the case of professional opinion, that any peer reviews met the open and rigorous standard established by USDA.

The *Review* is intended to inform land managers of the need to conduct plan amendment activities under NEPA and National Forest Management Act (NFMA) guidance. Garfield County's detailed request under the USDA guidelines for Information Quality Activities is as follows:

GENERAL No author, agency, office or group of authors is identified as taking responsibility for the report. Therefore, qualifications and expertise cannot be evaluated. In addition, there is a) no comparative information detailing the need to change existing plans; b) no assessment of current forest plan direction for managing livestock grazing as it relates to specific ecological conditions in riparian, aquatic, and sagebrush-grassland ecosystems and its effectiveness; c) no source, description or identification of numerous issues and conflicting views surrounding livestock grazing in the forests; and d) no review identifying what if any changes in resource conditions have occurred since the forest plans were established in 1986. Since these are the underlying purposes of the review, any decisions based on the document are unsupported.

Of the 12 photographs included in the *Review*, only 2 had date stamps; two are more than 5 years old; and 8 gave no indication of when they were taken. There were no comparative photographs to evaluate the effectiveness of the 1986 plan. Considering the twelve photos depict less than 0.02% of the acreage in the forests, one has to question whether the photographs are representative of a more pervasive condition or depict isolated site-specific instances. Based on information presented in the *Review*, one cannot determine if the photographs are even statistically representative of their own watercourse or riparian area. The document fails to comply with accepted statistical requirements.

The document fails to use the best available information. State and university researchers have been conducting studies on riparian areas in the forests subject to this *Review* for some time, but none of the data was referenced or presented. Utah State University has a library of thousands of comparative photographs depicting historical and current conditions on the forests; but they were not used. Riparian exclosures, studies, data, and analysis of the University's photos indicate over abundance of wildlife, encroachment of undesirable species and altered fire regimes (issues that can be managed under the existing Forest plans) are having a much greater impact on conditions than livestock grazing. But this was never mentioned or adequately addressed. Even resource specialists in the various ranger districts were not informed of the effort until it was complete, preventing inclusion of their site specific data, experience and expertise. In essence, the *Review* was done without considering the very data and conditions it was intended to evaluate.

The document fails to rely on statistical information and fails to evaluate a number of samples that are commensurate with the study area. More than 4 million acres are covered by the *Review*. Yet there are no substantive statistical analyses of the number of acres in upland verses riparian, of the various soil and vegetation types, of acres meeting standards and acres that are substandard, etc. There are no statistical or analytical examinations depicting a) areas without problems, b) areas with problems that can be corrected through existing management authority and / or c) areas with problems that cannot be corrected through existing management authority. Similarly there is no comparative analysis between problematic acreages that are a result of livestock practices and problematic acreages that are a result of other factors. A reasonable conclusion regarding the effectiveness of existing controls cannot be reached without sufficient statistical and analytical information and consideration of the use of existing authorized actions.

The document was prepared without proper transparency. The entire effort was kept hidden from agency staff with direct management responsibilities over affected resources and from local and state agencies that had requested early involvement. Local resource specialists that have knowledge, experience and expertise regarding existing, on-the-ground conditions were excluded from participation in the preparation of the *Review*. Local government was repeatedly told no effort was taking place in response to their requests to be included at the earliest possible date as authorized in NEPA, CEQ regulations and NFMA. The secrecy with which the *Review* was prepared confirms lack of compliance with the Data Quality Act and other federal laws.

REQUEST FOR RETRACTION Garfield County requests the *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014* be rescinded in its entirety. Garfield County also requests that the Forest Service immediately involve the State and the appropriate local governments in a reworking of the data and issues that went into the *Initial Review*. Though the *Initial Review* is a preliminary step toward amending a forest plan, it is unclear why this is being undertaken and if there is a clear need for a change in management direction.

SPECIFIC PARTIAL REQUESTS FOR CORRECTION If the *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014* cannot be rescinded in its entirety as requested above, Garfield County requests the following specific corrections:

Title Page – A listing of the authors, contributors and peer reviewers of the document should be included. In addition to the listing on the title page, an appendix should be added detailing, at a minimum, the following information:

- A detailed listing of each and every individual or group that participated in the preparation of the report.
- A detailed listing of the professional qualifications of every individual or group that participated in preparation of the report.
- A detailed listing of every individual or group's participation in any peer-review of the report.
- A detailed listing of the qualifications of any individual or group that participated peer review of the report.
- A listing of local Forest Service employees/experts that were consulted in the preparation of the report.
- A detailed rationale explaining why the authors and participants in the report were selected.
- A detailed rationale explaining why any local Forest Service employee / resource specialist was excluded from participation.
- A detailed rationale for why the peer-reviewers, if any, were selected.

Page 3, Paragraph 1. *The Initial Review provides the forest supervisors with information to assist them further with setting the scope, scale, process, and content of a subsequent assessment to identify preliminary needs for changing the forest plans.*

Garfield County asserts the *Review* provides forest supervisors with no information regarding need for change and no such information is provided in the *Review*. Garfield County requests a detailed listing of the need for changing the existing forest plans and documentation identifying why needed management actions cannot occur under the existing plans. The *Review* should be revised to include a detailed description identifying portions of the existing plans and what prohibits needed management actions.

Page 3, Paragraph 2. *Since 1986, ecosystem management science and methods have changed considerably, as well as how people view ecosystems and how they are managed.*

Garfield County asserts that ecosystem management science and methods have not changed significantly since forest plans were developed in 1986. Garfield County also asserts the range of how people view ecosystems and how they are managed has substantially unchanged. Garfield County asserts site-specific issues are a result of Forest Service's failure to implement actions authorized by the 1986 plans. Garfield County requests that a detailed listing of

science, methods, people's view of the ecosystems, and how ecosystems are managed is included in the document. Furthermore Garfield County requests the criteria for determining considerable versus moderate versus light changes in management science and methods be disclosed.

Page 3, Paragraph 3. *Recent collaborative efforts.*

Garfield County asserts the collaborative/collusive efforts referred to in the *Review* violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Furthermore, Garfield County asserts Forest Service officials privately and illegally met with special interest groups (Grand Canyon Trust, Western Watershed Projects and others), and this effort is a direct result of advice received from those groups. Garfield County requests that each and every meeting or communication between forest supervisors, the authors of this report and any group or individual that does not qualify for cooperating agency status under NEPA/CEQ Regulations be disclosed in an Appendix. The information shared in those meetings/communications should also be included.

Page 3, Paragraph 4. *The forest supervisors for the Dixie, Fishlake, and Manti-La Sal National Forests have heard disagreements about desired rangeland conditions on National Forest System lands in southern Utah both internally within the Forest Service, and externally from the public.*

Garfield County asserts there is no evidence or documentation justifying disagreements about desired rangeland conditions either from Forest Service employees or from the public. There may be isolated situations where site-specific conditions do not meet desired conditions, but it is unlikely anyone would choose forest illness over forest health. Detailed evidence documenting any disagreements regarding rangeland conditions must be included in the document.

Page 3, Paragraph 4. *These disagreements are based on several factors such as:*

- *new science that was not available when the forest plans were developed,*
- *differing values about natural resources,*
- *differing understanding of how grazing permits are administered, and*
- *differing understanding of the role of the forest plans relative to allotment-specific planning.*

Garfield County disputes the accuracy of this statement. Although application of science may have changed, no new science is currently available that was not considered under the forest plans of 1986. The range of values are the same; no new understandings of how grazing permits are administered have been developed; and there is no new understanding of the role of the forest plans relative to allotment specific planning. These are nothing more than flattering words used to justify an undocumented position. Garfield County requests that evidence of new science, differing values, differing understandings regarding grazing permits and the role of forest plans be included in this document. We also request evidence and documentation that such issues were not considered in the 1986 plans.

Page 3, Paragraph 5. *Because of numerous issues and conflicting views surrounding livestock grazing,*

Garfield County disputes the accuracy of the statement and asks for documented evidence of numerous issues and conflicting views surrounding livestock grazing. Issues and conflicts associated with livestock grazing were carefully considered in the 1986 plans. The only difference is today forest supervisors are willing to collude - behind closed doors, illegally - with special interest groups and are willing to cater to their requests. Garfield County requests that the numerous issues and conflicting views be clearly disclosed and documented in the Review.

Page 3, Paragraph 5. *... the forest supervisors of the three national forests requested a team of resource specialists to conduct an initial review to identify changes in resource conditions that have occurred since the 1986 forest plans were established.*

The Review fails to meet the request of supervisors. It fails to identify any changes that have occurred since 1986. It does present approximately 12 photos, many of which are undated and some of which are at least five years old. However, the photos are not representative of the forest as a whole, fail to document changes in resource conditions that have occurred since the 1986 forest plans were established, and fail to provide any comparative data. Garfield County requests the Review be modified to include: a) sufficient sites that are statistically representative of the three forest area; b) comparative analysis between 1986; and c) the analysis be conducted in an open manner that allows involvement of all forest employees, cooperating agencies and the public.

Page 3, Paragraph 5. *They asked the team to focus on identifying resource concerns, determining whether they might be related to livestock management and what, if anything, in the forest plans' direction could be related to those resource concerns.*

Garfield County asserts the initial Review fails to comply with the forest supervisors requests. The report indicates approximately 2/3 of the forests' allotments are meeting standards. On the other hand, resource concerns photographically documented in the Review cover less than 0.02% of the forest. Statistically, the Review failed to adequately document any concerns. Even in view of their limited conclusions, the team also failed to determine whether these concerns might be related to livestock management.

Page 3, Paragraph 5. *They asked the team to focus on identifying resource concerns, determining whether they might be related to livestock management and what, if anything, in the forest plans' direction could be related to those resource concerns.*

The authors failed to consider drought, intense rainfall events, wildlife impacts, comparative analysis between 1986 and the present, and other resource issues that clearly have an impact on forest health. This Review fails to provide to provide objective, scientific information necessary for supervisors to make any decisions.

Page 3, Paragraph 6. *Where concerns about natural resource conditions were expressed, the team conducted a cursory review of existing conditions.*

Garfield County disputes the accuracy of this statement. The entire *Review* effort was a clandestine process conducted by the forest supervisors behind closed doors. Resource specialists in the various ranger districts were not included; the public was not advised of the process; and the entire effort was limited to very few individuals. Garfield County heard rumors that an evaluation was taking place, but forest supervisors repeatedly told the County that nothing was going on. Even Forest Service resource specialists and permittees were not brought into the process until the document was complete. Garfield County asserts that any concerns regarding natural resource conditions were self generated by the undisclosed authors. Garfield County requests documentation regarding the number, source and details associated with any natural resource concerns that were expressed.

Garfield County also objects to any "cursory review" of existing conditions. The land area covered by the three forests is more than 4.4 million acres. The Federal Register notice citing the *Review* indicated that ecological conditions were not progressing and that specific resource concerns were identified for riparian vegetation, lakes, ponds, springs, wetlands, physical stream channel habitat, and sagebrush grasslands. Garfield County disputes that any of these issues were objectively evaluated in the *Review* and that the conclusions drawn by the forest supervisors are deficient. Garfield County also asserts the entire *Review* is arbitrary and capricious and based only on a cursory evaluation insufficient to adequately justify actions of the federal government.

Page 3, Paragraph 6. *The team based this Review on readily available monitoring information; information about existing conditions, including observed changes in natural resource conditions; and new scientific information*

This portion of the *Review* purports to base its conclusions on observed changes in natural resource conditions and new scientific information. Garfield County asserts this is false. We specifically request that evidence documenting observed changes to natural resource conditions from 1986 be included in the document; we also request the listing of new scientific information that was not in existence in 1986 be added including but not limited to the date of discovery, verification by appropriate agencies, applicability of the new science, and its limitations.

Page 3, Paragraph 6. *The team also reviewed the forest plans and identified potential areas they felt did not provide adequate direction for managing resources potentially impacted by livestock grazing. This document summarizes what the team has found so far.*

Other than general references, no specific portion of the 1986 forest plans is identified as lacking adequate direction for managing resources potentially impact by livestock grazing. In addition, no information is disclosed identifying management actions that are authorized under the existing plans but have not been implemented. Discussions with various resource specialists in

the respective forests indicate ecological conditions are satisfactory or are progressing towards satisfactory and that they were never contacted regarding resource conditions in their particular area of expertise. Garfield County's asserts the team was carefully selected to represent a particular bias. This particular sentence indicates the identification of the areas that may not provide adequate direction was based on the team's personal feelings. There is no evidence that it was based on objective science, analysis, statistical evaluations or even valid comparisons between conditions that existed in 1986 and existing conditions. Resource staff specialists with site specific knowledge were not contacted. However, this document is a result of what the team (whoever they are) felt. It is arbitrary and capricious on its face. The team failed to consider impacts from natural causes, drought, wildlife and other issues that may have more significant impact than livestock. Unfortunately because of the cursory nature of the report and the personal biases expressed by the team, no valid conclusions can be drawn.

Page 3, Paragraph 7. *Based on this initial Review, the forest supervisors felt it was appropriate ...*

Forest supervisors based their decision on this *Review*. But the *Review* fails to meet the data Quality Guidelines required by the Forest Service and fails to meet objective science standards for any federal agency. Therefore, the forest supervisors' decision is not supported by statistical analysis, objective science or anything but arbitrary feelings expressed by the clandestine project team. Garfield County requests that the entire *Review* be rescinded and the forest supervisors decision to proceed with an assessment be terminated.

Page 4, Paragraph 1. *In 2002, the Forest Service initiated the forest plan revision process for each of the three national forests; however, between 2002 and 2008, regulations directing forest planning underwent changes several times, including changes in procedural and forest plan content requirements. Because of the resulting uncertainty in plan revision requirements, the revision process was not completed. Funding is not currently available for completing the revision process on any of the three national forests, and re-engaging the revision process is not in the immediately foreseeable future.*

The entire paragraph is superfluous. It draws an unsupported conclusion as to why planning efforts for the forest beginning in 2002 were scrapped. Garfield County also questions the validity of statements regarding funding. Alan Rowley, Fishlake National Forest and Manti-LaSal National Forest supervisor has indicated funding is already in place to complete an environmental impact statement for grazing on the three forests in Southern Utah. Garfield County questions the difference in funding required to complete a major grazing EIS on three forests as opposed to an entire plan revision on any individual forest, particularly where the grazing plan is based on unsupported documentation and a faulty initial document. The statements in this paragraph are speculative at best. Garfield County requests specific information regarding the costs for full plan revision versus a grazing revision for three forests. Garfield County also requests documented evidence that previous forest planning efforts were terminated because of uncertainty regarding plan revision requirements. Information supporting these conclusions should be appropriately referenced in the document.

Page 4, Paragraph 2. *The requirements for developing, amending, and revising forest plans are*

provided in the implementing regulations for the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), referred to as the "Planning Rule" (Title 36 CFR Part 219). Under the current Planning Rule (adopted in 2012), forest plan amendments are to be based on identified needs to change the plan. The preliminary identification of a need to change a forest plan may be based on a new assessment; a monitoring report; or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances.

This paragraph emphasizes the importance of an objective, scientifically-based review. Forest supervisors have based their decisions on the faulty initial review. Garfield County asserts it is inadequate, fails to meet Data Quality Act standards and is an unreliable resource for decision-making purposes. Any subsequent actions conducted by the Forest Service as result of this initial review will also be faulty. It is imperative that the Forest Service rescind the entire document and start over.

Page 4, Paragraph 3. Production of cattle and calves dominates Utah agricultural receipts. In 2000, about 46.3 percent (\$468.4 million) of Utah farm receipts came from sales of cattle and sheep. Utah remains one of the leaders in the production of sheep and lambs (ranked sixth nationally).

Garfield County asserts that economic data from 2000 fails to meet highest and best science requirements for federal documents. Economic data is readily available from state and federal agencies. Authors just cut-and-pasted this information from a Draft Manti La-Sal Management Plan dated 2006. This shoddy work emphasizes the lack of care in which the authors developed the *Review*. Garfield County requests that current economic data be used in the analysis and that language from draft plans that were never approved be eliminated.

Page 4, Last Paragraph. Based on the resource concerns that the team of resource specialists identified...

At least six times to this point authors mention concerns, disagreements, and/or issues; but sources and documentation are omitted. The public has no way of knowing if these issues are specious or merit attention. Garfield County asserts resource concerns are arbitrarily and capriciously selected from isolated areas of the forests and do not represent a statistically sound representative sample. Garfield County requests a detailed listing of the locations demonstrating resource concerns, the acreages impacted by the concerns and the statistical analysis indicating such concerns are significant in the forests.

Page 5, Top of Page. Under each ecosystem identified, the following topics were identified by a team of resource specialists:

- Existing natural resource conditions*
- Forest plan concerns (direction in the current forest plans that is unclear or absent)*
- Potential sources of additional information that may be used in a more detailed assessment*

One of the main purposes of the report is to identify deficiencies the existing forest management plans. However, no comparison with conditions that existed in 1986 is presented. Garfield County asserts this fails to meet the basic purpose of the report and violates objectivity and utility requirements of the Data Quality Act.

Existing natural resource conditions are evaluated on such a small percentage of the Three Forest area that no statistical reliability is achieved. The discussion relates to natural resources in general and the efforts of the Forests to monitor them. There is little, if any, actual analysis regarding comparison between resource conditions in 1986 and existing conditions. Authors fail to meet utility and objectivity standards. There is no evidence the concerns expressed by the undisclosed authors were not considered as part of the 1986 planning process. The 1986 planning effort was a lengthy and detailed process. Only now, after nearly 30 years of implementation, the authors indicate the plans are inadequate - and that, without any comparative data whatsoever. Authors failed to contact resource specialists in the various Ranger Districts. Yet they attempt to identify additional sources of information. This fails to meet objectivity standards and ignores site specific information that is considered the highest and best science available. If data necessary to perform site-specific comparisons is not available, the entire document is based purely on speculation. Garfield County requests The Review be rescinded until these issues are resolved.

Page 5. Riparian and Aquatic Ecosystems. *They represent a small percentage of the landscape but are critical for most other resources, including groundwater recharge, and habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive wildlife and plant species.*

This sentence illustrates the generalize nature of the report and its reliance on assumptions rather than fact, site specific data and objective science. Riparian and aquatic ecosystems are generally located at the low point in the topographic system. They have little impact on any resources that are up-gradient including but not limited to timber, upland soil erosion, geology, archaeology, paleontology, etc. Groundwater recharge may be impacted more significantly by infiltration in upland sites; and riparian / aquatic ecosystems are sometimes a result of groundwater surfacing as springs or seeps. Threatened, endangered and sensitive wildlife species are often more prevalent on upland sites. Sage Grouse and Utah Prairie Dogs – species specific to the forests being considered – are only two examples. Garfield County requests the peer-review for the statement be included in the document and that the scientific basis and statistical analysis for the resources and species also be included.

Page 5, Paragraph 3. *The conditions of some riparian and wetland areas on the national forests are currently in a state where their capability to provide benefits are impaired. Some of the current riparian conditions may be attributable to large-scale ecosystem events like fire, or weather events like floods and drought. However, current and historic overuse of riparian areas by livestock appears to be a major factor in the riparian area impairment. This has lowered its resilience to catastrophic events, in some cases increasing the level of damage from such events. Riparian areas in poor condition are unable to trap soil and water, which results in increased*

erosion and sedimentation, lowered water tables, and an inability to buffer downstream areas from the effects of accelerated runoff.

The entire paragraph is based on speculative assumptions and fails to identify any reasonable statistical correlation. Does the word "some" describe an insignificant part or the majority? Where authors indicate capabilities are impaired, are they slightly impaired, significantly impaired, or are the words inserted only has justification without objective, scientific or statistical analysis. Authors cite current and historic livestock use as a major factor in riparian impairment. However, recent studies by Charles Kay indicate wildlife use is much more damaging in many areas of Southern Utah. Livestock permittees in the area have photographic evidence which supports Mr. Kay's studies. However, none of this information was considered in the analysis. In fact, the majority of references are landscape level studies that may not be pertinent to the forests in Southern Utah.

- Garfield County asserts these oversights were intentional and were aimed at pushing the results to preconceived conclusion. Garfield County requests that the statistical analysis of the areas that are impaired and their level of impairment be included in the document. Garfield County also request that riparian, aspen generation and other studies conducted on the three forests be considered. Garfield County also finds questionable the authors failed to contact local resource specialist to obtain their data, trends and analysis. Garfield County requests that the report be revised to include data trends and analysis of local resource specialists for each of the areas that have been impaired. Garfield County also request detailed justification of why local site-specific data was ignored while generalize landscape level assumptions were used as the basis for the report. Additionally, Garfield County requests the comparative conditions between 1986 and the present be disclosed.

Page 5, Last Paragraph. Riparian and wetland areas across the three national forests have been impacted by past and ongoing activities including, but not limited to: roads, timber harvest and other vegetation management, dams and diversions, fires, and livestock grazing. Historically, livestock grazing and its effect on riparian vegetation have had significant effects on riparian area change. Cattle typically show stronger preferences for use of riparian areas than sheep. Roath and Krueger (1982) and Leonard et al. (1997) found that a riparian zone in a forested watershed comprised 1.9 percent of the allotment, but produced 21 percent of the available forage and 81 percent of the forage consumed. Similar disproportionate concentrations of livestock use in riparian areas have been documented in other studies (Marlow and Pogacnik 1986, Kovalchik and Elmore 1992, Reid and Pickford 1946, Ehrhart and Haosen 1998). New information and research related to both the physical and biological impacts of livestock grazing on riparian and aquatic ecosystems have occurred since the approval of the 1986 forest plans.

Authors indicate that historically livestock grazing has had significant effect on riparian area change. However, authors failed to disclose the period of history being considered. The natural fire regime has been altered by forest management actions over the past 50 years. Documented accounts from early European pioneers indicate an aggressive use of prescribed fire for vegetative manipulation by Native Americans in the mid to late 1800s. Elk were introduced into the three forest area in the 1970s. These factors have an impact on riparian vegetation. Changing climate, drought, development of reservoirs and dams, off-forest alterations that result in head

cutting, wild & prescribed fire, and other man-made and/or natural conditions impact forest health. The purported purpose of the *Review* is to identify preliminary needs for changing the forest plans. However, authors failed to compare the existing conditions with those that existed in 1986 and have failed to include any analysis regarding the impacts of other factors. Without any comparative analysis, and without identifying actions that are available to the forest that have not been implemented, no reasonable conclusion can be reached.

In addition, authors indicate new information and research have occurred since the approval of the 1986 forest plans. Yet they cite research from 1946, 1982 and 1986. Even the studies cited after 1986 had no new information. The studies only quantify characteristics of the animals and vegetation types of the forest. Garfield County asserts the forests have presented no valid analysis, no comparative analysis, and/or no statistical analysis which fulfill the purpose of this *Review*. Garfield County asserts authors failed to provide information that meets the objectivity and utility requirements the Data Quality Act. Garfield County specifically requests that a) the new information and research referenced in the document be provided as part of that analysis, b) that information which conflicts with management actions authorized in 1986 plans be identified, c) that management actions authorized by the 1986 plans that are consistent with evidence and information be identified, and d) a detailed comparative analysis between conditions that existed in 1986 and that currently exist be presented.

Page 6, Paragraph 1 & Bullets. *Current observations of riparian areas across the three national forests have shown that some riparian areas have impacts that appear to be at least partially related to cattle and sheep use. For example:*

- *In areas where a woody shrub component is expected, the majority of woody shrubs are heavily hedged.*
- *In some areas little to no evidence of new shrubs becoming established and growing above the height of the closely grazed grasses and sedges can be found.*
- *Some riparian communities lack species diversity and are dominated by Kentucky bluegrass, instead of multiple species of sedges; few forbs are evident, except dandelions or other early seral species.*

The statement can be applied to almost any location on any National Forest. How do authors quantify "some?" Is the mere appearance of impacts a cause of concern? When authors say, "at least partially," is it a significant impact or an extremely minor impact? Garfield County also questions the objectivity of the *Review* when authors failed to contact local resource specialists that may have had the answers to some of the question cited above. Garfield County requests that the statistical analysis for riparian areas that have impacts related to cattle and sheep use be listed. Garfield County also request that a detailed impact analysis be conducted to identify the comparative impacts of other factors which may also be "at least partially related" to riparian conditions. The County also requests that an evaluation of management techniques authorized and forest management actions implemented under the agency's 1986 plans be included.

Page 6, Last 3 Paragraphs. *Currently managers on the three national forests use some combination of annual use criteria and long-term trend monitoring to determine whether livestock are being managed in a way that will protect resources, including riparian area values.*

Annual use standards, or indicators, (such as riparian stubble height) are intended as one proxy for providing natural resource conditions that are sustainable over the long term. For example, if riparian vegetation stubble height is 4 inches or more at the end of the grazing period, the plants should have the energy reserve to regrow, and the vegetation should be tall enough to trap sediment during high flows, as well as prevent streambank erosion. Meeting this annual use standard should be important to provide sustainable natural resource conditions. While the majority of annual use monitoring records indicates that grazing compliance standards are being met, the majority of the monitoring is taking place in uplands. Additionally there are current data gaps for some areas where no reported monitoring has occurred for the past 5 years. Likewise, there are ranger districts where no monitoring was reported in riparian areas.

Riparian vegetation trend monitoring using the Winward (2000) greenline methodology is designed to be the long-term validation for the stubble height and woody browse annual use criteria on at least a portion of the three national forests. There may be cumulative impacts to riparian areas; however, where greenline vegetation trend studies are not meeting objectives, the impacts of livestock management should be considered as one of the potential causes and solutions to the condition and trend.

Authors indicate the forests use a combination of methods to manage livestock in a manner that will protect resources. Contrarily, they also indicate there are ranger districts where no monitoring was reported in any riparian areas. Land managers have the tools available to conduct monitoring but have chosen not to do so. Garfield County questions how this requires a need for change in the management plans. It also seems that prior to changing the plans, land managers should implement the options that are available to them. Garfield County also disputes the statement that the majority of annual use monitoring is taking place on uplands. Garfield County requests that a statistical summary of monitoring sites, their locations, types, and ecological site conditions be included in the Review. Garfield County also requests the entire document be discarded because it demonstrates pre-decisional bias and fails to comply with Data Quality Act standards.

Furthermore, authors indicate the majority of annual use monitoring records indicate compliance with standards. This would indicate management actions authorized by the existing forest plans are adequate on the majority of the forest. Garfield County requests specific detailed analysis identifying areas where a) standards have not been met, b) management actions that are available in forest plans but are not being implemented, and c) conditions other than livestock grazing impact compliance with standards. The analysis must be based on site-specific information and not generalized statements that do little to meet the purpose of the Review.

Page 6, Last paragraph. *Riparian vegetation trend monitoring using the Winward (2000) greenline methodology is designed to be the long-term validation for the stubble height and woody browse annual use criteria on at least a portion of the three national forests. There may*

be cumulative impacts to riparian areas; however, where greenline vegetation trend studies are not meeting objectives, the impacts of livestock management should be considered as one of the potential causes and solutions to the condition and trend.

Authors reference the Winward (2000) greenline methodology. However, they failed to indicate whether this is currently authorized by the plans. Later, authors indicate that long term riparian data appears to be limited on two of the forests. They also indicate surveys cover less than 1% of the perennial stream miles. Without data for two of the Forests and without adequate, statistically relevant data, the *Review* is based on mere supposition and fails to meet Data Quality Act requirements. Authors clearly state that livestock management should be considered as one potential cause. There is no scientific or objective utility in merely considering something a potential cause, especially in light of other potential causes. Garfield County requests the referenced surveys be conducted on the three forests in order to fulfill the purposes of the *Review*. Surveys also needed to be conducted in 1986 for comparative analysis.

Page 7, Figure 1. The photo was taken in 2006, and conditions may have changed significantly over the last eight years. In addition, no comparative photo is included for conditions of the same area in 1986. No analysis of the effectiveness of the forest plans can be made if no comparison is made for conditions that existed in 1986. Garfield County requests a detailed comparative analysis for all sites included in the plan. Garfield County also requests the information regarding who took the picture, the purposes for which fiction was taken and how the forest service obtained the picture.

Page 7 last Paragraph. *Through 2012, long-term riparian vegetation trend data has been collected at 335 locations across the three national forests. The majority of these sites are on the Dixie National Forest. Eighty-three percent of these long-term riparian vegetation monitoring sites are on cattle allotments. The remaining sites are located on sheep allotments. Each location represents an approximately 110-meter length of stream, meaning we have survey data on less than 1 percent of the perennial stream miles (22.9 miles of greenline on 2,977 miles of perennial stream) across the three national forests.*

This paragraph indicates 335 locations in riparian areas are being measured on the forests. Previously, authors indicated that a majority of monitoring sites are on uplands. This paragraph also indicates less than 1% of perennial stream miles are being surveyed. That percentage decreases significantly where riparian areas are under lentic conditions or are ephemeral. Garfield County asserts basing decisions on data that is collected on less than 1% of the perennial stream miles and a smaller percentage of all riparian areas is not statistically significant. Garfield County also asserts that failure to compare existing conditions with those from 1986 fails to meet the purpose of the *Review*. Garfield County requests a map indicating the location of all upland and riparian monitoring sites be included in the document and that a statistical analysis be performed to identify whether conclusions are valid.

Page 8 paragraph 1. *It appears that long-term riparian vegetation trend data is somewhat limited*

on the Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests. Additionally, the purpose of greenline monitoring is to indicate whether the vegetation is sufficient to buffer streambanks from erosion and preserve physical channel function. As noted in the "Physical Stream Channel Habitat" section below, there are concerns that the existing greenline vegetation objectives do not adequately buffer the streambanks from erosion and preserve physical channel function. Additionally, the vegetation community along the greenline does not necessarily infer that the remainder of the riparian area and floodplain is ecologically intact.

The entire paragraph is speculative. Authors state that it appears riparian trend data is limited on the forests. It is either limited, or it is not. And if limited, does sufficient data exist to make a reasonable decision? This "iffy" situation is compounded by the last sentence indicating their method for determining functionality does not necessarily indicate the remainder of the floodplain is intact. It follows that it also does not indicate that it is not intact. If the data is inconclusive, it fails to provide necessary reliability for any decision. Garfield County requests the forest service follows transparency requirements and includes all data associated with riparian conditions and refrains from making arbitrary judgments.

Page 8, Paragraph 2. *Through 2012, the last reading at each of the 335 data sites showed that 64 percent of the sites were meeting their riparian vegetation objectives and had a stable or upward trend. Slightly more than one-third (36 percent) of the riparian vegetation trend sites measured through 2012 were not meeting the objectives outlined for them. Most of the sites not meeting riparian vegetation objectives are on cattle allotments and only 6 percent of the sites on sheep allotments are not meeting riparian objectives. Only half of the sites not meeting objectives had more than one reading (a trend measurement), but about 65 percent of those with a trend showed either a stable trend at a level below objectives or continued decline.*

This paragraph fails to provide the statistical surety on which to base a decision. Accepting statements that the majority of the data was on the Dixie National Forest and data is limited on the Fishlake and Manti-LaSal National Forests and assuming a monitoring site of approximately 110 m long and 15 m wide, data sites comprise less than .003% of the forest acreage. No analysis is presented that the sites are representative of conditions on the majority of the riparian areas in the forest and no conditions are described for the time when the forest plans were created. Conclusions from the data can also be questioned by the limited amount of substandard sites. Simple math indicates that 36% of the sites not meeting standards multiplied by half of the sites that have trend data multiplied by 65% of those sites indicates less than 12% of all of the measured sites have a stable trend at a level below objectives or continued to decline. No explanation is offered if the conditions are livestock related, wildlife related, drought related, natural soils related, storm event related, or any other factor. Garfield County requests a detailed analysis demonstrating compliance with objectivity and utility and requirements for forest service projects.

Page 8, Paragraph 3. *The sampling described above is the most comprehensive and robust evaluation of the wetland/riparian conditions using vegetation as the metric. However, visual observations by field-going specialists indicate that this is not the complete story. In many instances, areas that meet the vegetation metric show indications of bank changes and bank*

instability, which are not included in the robust measurement of trends.

In spite of the quality of data described above, authors indicate their analysis is the most comprehensive and robust evaluation of wetland/riparian conditions using vegetation the metric. Data Quality Act guidelines require robust evaluation. It is extremely questionable how less than 12% of 3/1000th of a percent can be described as robust. Data Quality Guidelines require that limitations and uncertainty also be fully disclosed. Garfield County request a detailed explanation of the uncertainty and limits associated with data used for this analysis.

Garfield County agrees with the authors that their cursory review of data on acreage that comprises less than 0.0004% of the three forests does not tell the complete story. However we question the integrity and objectivity of the "field going specialists." Garfield County asserts transparency requirements of the Data Quality Act mandate inclusion of names, qualifications, date of observations, analytical methods used by the field going specialist, data, notes, and documentation be included in this Review. Garfield County also questions whether the field going specialist were federal employees or were private interest with predetermined bias. In the case of the latter, acceptance of the data described herein would constitute FACA violations and an intentional contradiction of Data Quality Act. Garfield County requests full documentation of the field trips and qualifications of the field going specialist and a full disclosure of uncertainties, limitations, comprehensiveness, and robustness of the entire process. Garfield County also request appropriate disciplinary action if it is determined forest officials violated FACA and included advice of private special interest groups without public disclosure. This paragraph also fails to indicate whether natural changes and bank stability are a result of livestock grazing practices or other occurrences and if existing management authorizations are suitable for correction. Without such analysis of document fails to provide any utility in meeting the purposes for which was created. Garfield County requests that such information be included.

Page 8, Paragraph 4. *In summary, the long-term vegetation trend monitoring shows that two-thirds of riparian areas are meeting their designated objectives for greenline vegetation, while one-third are not. Concerns remain over whether the current long-term vegetation trend objectives are sufficient to protect ecological resources values in stream channels and the riparian area beyond the greenline and this will be discussed further in the "Physical Stream Channel Habitat" section below. Additionally, while there may be evaluation of the long-term trend monitoring results in relationship to compliance with annual use indicators, the success of the grazing management system, and potential alternative management strategies at the unit level, no large-scale evaluation of the relationship between management and the long-term trend monitoring results has been completed.*

Authors indicate concerns remain regarding the sufficiency of existing programs, yet they fail to identify the concerns, evaluate the validity, or indicate their source. Authors also indicate long-term trend data has been consider regarding compliance with annual use factors, the success of the grazing management system and potential alternative management strategies at the unit level. But they decried that there is no large-scale evaluation of the relationship between management and the monitoring results. Garfield County asserts individual site specific unit level management provides better protection of federal lands than large-scale evaluations that are more

general in nature. Garfield County also asserts a "one-size-fits-all" approach of the three forest evaluations fails to use best science, fails to meet objectivity and utility requirements. Garfield County requests any analysis includes a statistically representative sample of site specific conditions.

Page 8, Paragraph 5. *Without any evaluation of the relationship between annual use indicators and the results of long-term riparian vegetation trend data, our ability to interpret long-term vegetation trend data is confounded by permit administration issues. Documented and undocumented noncompliance with stubble height standards has been observed across the three national forests by Forest Service personnel and the public (see Figures 2 and 3). Forest Service personnel and the public have also documented livestock in pastures and allotments before or after the season of use indicated in the annual operating instructions. In many cases, livestock have been documented in multiple pastures on the same allotment. Some allotments may indeed be managed with different permittees using different pastures at the same time by intent, for example, to spread them out or because of locations of turnout or removal. However, often these pastures have exceeded annual use criteria, as well. Without making the connection between permit compliance and long-term vegetation trend data, it is difficult to validate the existing annual use criteria in terms of whether they are moving the resource toward ecological desired conditions. Another factor is frequency of defoliation. How many times during a grazing season will a plant be grazed and does it have a chance to regrow. Best management is to only have one defoliation event. This becomes difficult with both livestock and wildlife in the same location.*

Authors inexplicably contradict their statement in the preceding paragraph when they state without any evaluation of relationship between annual use indicators and result of long-term riparian vegetation trend data their ability to interpret long-term vegetation trend is confounded. Garfield County is also concerned that the Forest Service cites noncompliance reported by forest service personnel and the public, yet fails to disclose those individuals and the circumstances regarding the reports. Garfield County has repeatedly complained that the Forest Service has violated FACA and uses special interest groups as unpaid advisors. They may have even been the source of many of the statements in this document. The Forest Service claims a series of complaints regarding grazing but fails to indicate their own efforts to implement programs authorized by the 1986 plans. Garfield County asserts that each one of the problems is a result of the Forest Service's failure to comply with its own plans and to properly manage fire, wildlife and other natural resources. The latter portion of this paragraph brings in ideas promoted by special interest groups which may or may not have the forests' best interest at heart. Additionally, the last sentence recognizes that wildlife is an impact; but the Forest Service has yet to quantify its impact and disclose the riparian damage attributable to wildlife. Garfield County requests that the Forest Service comply with transparency requirements and Data Quality Act guidelines and disclose the documented and undocumented reports and information associated with any individual that has participated in generating data or contributing to this Review.

Page 9, Photos. No date is included for photos, and no effort has been made to identify whether these areas are representative of the watercourse they depict. Resource concerns on this page

were evaluated as part of the 1986 plans, yet no comparison between conditions in 1986 and the present is made. The photos do not include comparative photos, so the public cannot evaluate whether there has been a change of condition. There is no indication of season of use, timing and other grazers that may be using the areas shown in the photos. Garfield County also questions the source of photos. We request that you include the name photographer the date and the conditions under which the ground was exposed during the growing season prior to the time the photo was taken. Garfield County also requests comparative information for each of the sites with conditions that existed in 1986.

The entire page fails to comply with objectivity requirements including but not limited to: a) use of reasonably reliable and reasonably timely the data and information; b) use of best available data; c) ensuring transparency in its dissemination by identifying known sources and limitations in the data, and d) presenting the modeler analysis logically so the conclusions and recommendations are well supported. Without comparative data from 1986 how can the public or public officials determine if conditions are improving and forest plan management is suitable? Garfield County requests the entire document be rescinded, the three Forests cease illegal collusion with special interest groups, and an appropriate public process be initiated for each of the forests individually in compliance with NFMA, CEQ Regulations, NEPA, and other applicable laws to evaluate all concerns, not just grazing.

Page 10, Forest Plan Concerns. *An important part of fulfilling the Forest Service mission includes evaluating management actions related to streams and riparian areas to restore or maintain water quality, water quantity, and biotic integrity. In general, the current desired conditions in the forest plans for riparian areas are limited to vegetation and do not adequately describe channel form and bank condition for stream channel and wetland areas. Where desired conditions are described, they are not sufficient (they do not describe all the natural resource conditions we need to monitor to determine the health of the system), some are conflicting, and some are not supported by current best available science. If desired conditions are not established, it will be impossible to determine if conditions are improving or being maintained. In addition, short-term and long-term objectives, indicators, attributes, and best management practices are not sufficiently developed to appropriately identify concerns necessary for proactive management. If objectives are not established, success cannot be measured and direction is lost. Where these objectives, indicators and best management practices have been developed, they have not been adequately applied.*

Annual use standards and guidelines for riparian areas are different across the three national forests. The Dixie National Forest uses three general annual use indicators to determine when proper use has been achieved: stubble height, bank alteration, and percent use on woody browse. The Dixie National Forest specifies that the evaluation of maximum allowable forage use for stubble height occurs at the end of the growing season. The Fishlake National Forest uses stubble height, percent use on woody browse and percent bare ground as annual use indicators. The Fishlake National Forest specifies that the evaluation of maximum allowable forage use for stubble height occurs at any time during the grazing season ("point in time" measurement). The Manti-La Sal National Forest uses stubble height, soil disturbance and percent utilization of key species. The Manti-La Sal National Forest specifies that the

evaluation of maximum allowable forage use for stubble height and percent utilization occurs at any time during the grazing season ("point in time" measurement).

The authors are self-contradictory. The second sentence indicates desired conditions are limited to vegetation, yet the second paragraph indicates the Dixie National Forest uses three indicators, stubble height, bank alteration and use on woody browse. Authors indicate annual use standards are different in the three forests. That is as it should be. The authors failed to indicate the basis on which they find the concern and the limits of that evaluation. No utility is provided by the discussion. Authors simply state existing practices without disclosing limitations and authorizations under the 1986 plans. Garfield County request listing of limits and inadequacies of the Review. The County also requests correction of inconsistencies.

SUSPENSION OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Garfield County's dissatisfaction and complaint can be documented through every page of the report. Authors failed to identify the differences between 1986 in the present; authors failed to provide meaningful analysis that accurately describes areas of concern and areas that are meeting standards; authors have failed to identify their sources; authors have included undocumented photos in the *Review*; authors failed to use sound analytical methods; authors have failed to document reasonably reliable and timely data and information and the sources of the information; authors have failed to validate data and statements against other information; authors often conflict with their own report; authors have failed to explain the rationale for using data presented in the document over other data that was available to them; authors have failed to use data that was collected by local resource specialists; authors have failed to provide transparent documentation and data sources, methodology, assumptions, limitations, uncertainty, computations, and constraints; authors failed to clearly identify sources of uncertainty affecting the quality of the report; authors have failed to provide clear documentation of appropriate peer-reviews to ensure objectivity; authors have failed to clearly document needs that comply with the stated purpose of the *Review*.

Given the inadequacy of the entire document, Garfield County submits this abbreviated complaint and request for rescission. The County reserves the right to augment the complaint with information contained in pages 10 through 28 of the *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014*. However, time constraints prohibit a full line by line evaluation at this time.

Garfield County requests the entire document be rescinded and the entire project be terminated. Should the Forest Service desire to proceed, they should do so in strict compliance with NFMA, CEQ Regulations, NEPA, and other federal law.

SUMMARY

Garfield County has attempted to avoid adversarial action by encouraging the Dixie National Forest and its neighbors to comply with federal law, coordinate its pre-NEPA and NEPA

planning efforts with local government, bring its plan into consistency with local plans, and mitigate adverse impacts. Unfortunately, Forest Service efforts have resulted in pursuit of a private consultation and evaluation program, emphasis on biased analysis rather than objective science, and creation of a substandard document developed behind closed doors. On October 23, 2014 Alan Rowley (Fishlake National Forest Supervisor and Acting Manti – LaSal National Forest Supervisor) publicly stated in a Piute County Commission meeting the *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014* did not meet Forest Service Data Quality Guidelines.

Some may say Garfield County should sit back and wait until a final decision. The County believes there are more advantageous uses for limited federal resources and that federal agencies have an obligation to comply with established law without being compelled by local governments.

Garfield County respectfully requests the National Forest Service to rescind all previous work and postpone any additional work on the Three Forest Grazing Process until it provides the information requested under the Data Quality and Regulatory Flexibility Acts, coordinates its plan with the local and state governments, identifies and resolves inconsistencies between the forest plan and the initial *Review*, mitigates adverse social and economic impacts, and strictly complies with existing law. Inasmuch as none of these issues are new, we respectfully request that a preliminary written response is provided to the County Commission prior to February 1, 2014. We understand significant cooperative efforts will be required by many entities beyond that date, and we are ever willing to commit our best efforts to serve the American public and the residents and visitors of Garfield County and Utah.

We thank you in advance for your most sincere efforts to carefully evaluate this request, and we look forward to substantive, cooperative discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brian B. Bremner', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian B. Bremner,
Public Lands Coordinator

REQUIRED INFORMATION

1. This Request for rescission / correction is made under USDA's Information Quality Guidelines.
2. Contact Information: Brian B. Bremner, Garfield County, Utah, 55 South Main, P.O. Box 77, Panguitch, Utah 84759, Phone: (35) 676-1119, Fax: (435) 676-8239, email: engineer@color-country.net.
3. Description of Information to Rescind / Correct: *Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests, August 2014* as referenced in the Federal Register notice initiating a Forest Plan Assessment Process for Grazing Within the Three National Forests, 79 FR 159, p. 48721.
4. Explanation of Non – Compliance: See formal complaint above.
5. Explanation of the Effect of the Alleged Error: The *Review* is faulty and creates an inaccurate foundation upon which Forest Supervisors have relied. The faulty nature of the *Review* results in an entirely unfounded decision making process. Therefore the *Review* needs to be rescinded.
6. Recommendation and Justification of How the Information Should Be Corrected: The *Review* should be rescinded in its entirety. The justification is explained above in the detailed narrative.

Garfield County reserves the right to supplement this complaint.



File Code: 1570

Date: MAR 09 2015

Mr. Brian B. Bremner
Garfield County Engineer/Public Lands Coordinator
55 South Main
P. O. Box 77
Panguitch, UT 84759

Dear Mr. Bremner:

This correspondence responds to your letter of December 16, 2014, in which you requested the correction of data and information in the "Initial Review of Livestock Grazing Effects on Select Ecosystems of the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests (Initial Review)."

Intermountain Regional Forester, Nora Rasure, is currently leading an effort to develop a regional strategy to revise all Forest Plans within the Region. Therefore, she has decided to set aside the Initial Review and discontinue the 3-forest plan grazing amendment process and focus on developing the regional strategy. Ms. Rasure is working with forest supervisors to holistically approach forest planning, either revisions or amendments, with the myriad issues that might need to be addressed locally. As the Region moves forward with forest planning processes, they will follow the new 2012 National Forest Management Act planning rule, including development of appropriate social, economic, and ecological assessments with collaborative engagement of interested publics and local governments.

Since the Initial Review that you have requested to be corrected has been set aside, a decision on the merits of your request is unnecessary. Therefore, a Request for Reconsideration will not be offered, either.

If you have questions regarding your Request for Correction, please contact Sharon Parker, Data Quality Officer, at 703-605-5257 or sparker01@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

DAINA D. APPLE
Director, Knowledge Management and Communications

cc: Sharon Parker, Ralph E. Giffen, Nora B. Rasure, Brian Pentecost, Angelita S. Bullets, Allen Rowley, Leanne Marten, Brian Bremner

