



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
20250-0100

**TO:** Victoria Christiansen  
Chief  
United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

**FROM:** Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonny Perdue".

JUN 12 2020

**SUBJECT:** Secretarial Memorandum to the Chief of the Forest Service

**Purpose:** Establish vision, priorities, and direction on:

- Increasing the productivity of National Forests and Grasslands
- Valuing our Nation's grazing heritage and the National Grasslands
- Increasing access to our National Forests
- Expediting environmental reviews to support active management

As Secretary of Agriculture, it is my duty to ensure our National Forests and Grasslands are on a path to health and productivity so they can continue to meet the needs of citizens and communities, both now and into the future.

It is the first priority of the Forest Service to serve the American people and work in ways that exemplify the values of Shared Stewardship. We need modern systems and approaches and less complicated regulations to serve our customers and improve our delivery of the goods and services that the American people want and need from the Nation's Forest System.

The 193 million acres of public lands managed by the Forest Service provide important resources and recreational opportunities to the people of this great Nation. These lands are critical for the prosperity of rural communities, sustaining jobs and livelihoods in grazing, mining, oil and gas development, recreation and forestry — sectors that support our American way of life. These lands also furnish food and water that all life depends on.

While I am proud of the progress to promote active management, reduce hazardous fuels, work across boundaries and increase the resiliency of our Nation's forests and grasslands, I believe more can be done. Today, I am announcing a blueprint for reforms to further provide relief from burdensome regulations, improve customer service, and boost the productivity of our National Forests and Grasslands.

**Increasing the productivity of National Forests and Grasslands**

The American people rely on our National Forests and Grasslands for a variety of products and services that sustain jobs and livelihoods in rural communities, feed America, and supply the clean water that sustains life. I am directing the Forest Service to focus resources on activities that support the productive use of these lands to deliver goods and services efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of our citizens. The Forest Service will:

- streamline processes and identify new opportunities to increase America's energy dominance and reduce reliance on foreign countries for critical minerals;
- modernize management practices and reduce regulatory burdens to promote active management on Forest Service lands to support and protect rural communities, critical watersheds, and species habitat; and
- expedite broadband development on Forest Service lands to increase internet connectivity in rural America.

### **Valuing our Nation's grazing heritage and the National Grasslands**

The Forest Service manages 3.8 million acres of National Grasslands across 12 Western States. These lands are managed for a variety of sustainable multiple-use goods and services for the American people. The National Grasslands are a conservation success story; abandoned and infertile after the Dust Bowl in the early 20th century, they now support a thriving agricultural industry and provide important wildlife habitat. They are a symbol of pride for many Americans.

The National Grasslands play a vital role in the fabric of rural communities, supporting thousands of jobs, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to the economy, and producing food for America and the entire world. They are managed sustainably with the help of ranching families, who pride themselves as conservationists, ensuring that these lands will remain productive for generations to come. To this end, the Forest Service will:

- establish in forest plans that grazing and support for grazing on the National Grasslands is essential for their management within the framework of their governing statutes;
- streamline renewal of range permits and range improvements on the National Forests and Grasslands; and
- enhance flexibility for Forest Service employees to work with ranching families and communities.

### **Increasing access to National Forest System Lands**

It is imperative for the Forest Service to manage the National Forests and Grasslands for the benefit of the American people. These lands provide a multitude of public benefits, including diverse recreational opportunities, access to world-class hunting and fishing, and forest products that support America's traditions and way of life. Accordingly, the Forest Service will:

- increase access to Forest Service lands by streamlining the permit process for recreational activities and embracing new technologies and recreation opportunities;
- open public access to National Forest System lands with currently limited access where feasible in cooperation with States, counties, and partners; and
- improve customer service by modernizing and simplifying forest products permitting and the Forest Service land exchange process.

### **Expediting environmental reviews to support active management**

Management activities on National Forest System lands require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws and regulations. Under this administration, the Forest Service has worked to streamline the corresponding processes while conserving public lands and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. I am directing the agency to further emphasize this effort through greater accountability for efficient decision making, succinct and understandable documentation of compliance, and focused and effective public engagement. The Forest Service will:

- set time and page limits on the completion of environmental documents, including categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, and environmental impact statements;
- streamline policy to ensure environmental reviews focus on analysis that is required by law and regulation;
- work across the government to initiate the development of policies for alternative procedures to streamline consultation processes and environmental reviews; and
- expedite compliance with State Historic Preservation Offices for vegetation management and facility and infrastructure improvements.