



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Black Hills
National
Forest

Mystic Ranger District
8221 South Highway 16
Rapid City, SD 57702
Phone 605-343-1567 Fax 605-343-7134

File Code: 1950, 2210 - Mystic Range Project

Date: April 09, 2010

Greetings from the Black Hills National Forest:

Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) personnel recently completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Mystic Range Project. The Mystic Range Project falls under the authority and guidelines of the 1996 schedule the Forest Service provided the US Congress in response to the 1995 Rescission Act. The 1995 Rescission Act directed the Forest Service to complete environmental analysis on grazing allotments on National Forest System lands.

The Mystic Range Project generally lies within the central portion of the Mystic Ranger District, which is located in western South Dakota. The project area encompasses eight grazing allotments: Bald Horse (27,828 acres), Deerfield (7,874 acres), Palmer Gulch (14,190 acres), Porcupine (9,858 acres), Redfern (11,573 acres), Rimmer (2,011 acres), Slate Prairie (5,896 acres), and Tigerville (5,825 acres). The project area consists of approximately 85,055 acres of National Forest System lands.

The project's main focus is to determine whether or not livestock grazing should continue on the eight allotments and, if so, whether any changes may be needed to meet the Black Hills National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended (Forest Plan).

The Mystic Ranger District proposes to reauthorize grazing of domestic livestock on eight grazing allotments and improve livestock management as needed. The purpose of and need for the Mystic Range Project is to:

- Improve livestock management so that it is consistent with the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines of the Forest Plan, as amended.
- Improve species composition of upland vegetation.
- Improve streambank stability.
- Improve riparian vegetation diversity and abundance.
- Reduce the risk of livestock-vehicle collisions.

I have enclosed a copy of the Mystic Range DEIS. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background and comparison of alternatives for many readers to judge the relative merits of the various alternative approaches to improving the current Range Management program on these eight allotments. At this time, the Forest Service has not identified a preferred alternative. More detail on the effects of alternatives is presented in Chapter 3.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides for a 45-day public review/comment period for a DEIS. Comments on the Mystic Range Project must be in writing and postmarked or emailed no later than 45 days after the Notice of Availability is published in the *Federal Register*, which is expected to be on April 09, 2010. Comments on the DEIS should be specific and address



the adequacy of the document and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3). I would greatly appreciate if you would take the time from your busy schedule to review and comment on the Mystic Range Project DEIS. So, for example, if you prefer some aspects of an alternative but disagree with others, please be as specific as possible when sending your comments. These comments will be used to prepare a Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD) and are critical in making good decisions about how to manage this area of your National Forest.

Please send comments to: Robert Thompson, District Ranger, Mystic Ranger District, Mystic Range Project, 8221 South Highway 16, Rapid City, SD 57702. Or, if preferred, you may email your comments to: comments-rocky-mountain-black-hills-mystic@fs.fed.us with 'Mystic Range' as the subject. The DEIS is also available on the BHNF web site at www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/projects.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Katie Van Alstyne at the Mystic Ranger District office in Rapid City at (605)-343-1567, or write to us at the above address. Thank you for your time and interest in the management of your National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/Robert J. Thompson

ROBERT J. THOMPSON
District Ranger

Enclosure:
Mystic Range Project DEIS
Mystic Range Project Comment Form