

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

January 11, 2010

Vern Keller
Range NEPA Coordinator
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, NV 89431

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Martin Basin Rangeland Project, Humboldt County, Nevada (CEQ#20090413)

Dear Mr. Keller:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA or “the Agency”) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and provided comment to the Forest Service on April 17, 2009. We rated the DEIS as Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information (EC-2), primarily due to concerns over the impacts that proposed grazing would have on water quality and the potential for recovery of the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout. We also asked for additional information on the impacts on downstream users, Allotment Management Plans (AMPs), Forest Service private land purchases, and the process for determining permitted numbers of cow/calf pairs (and/or animal unit months (AUMs)).

EPA is pleased that many of the issues identified in our review of the DEIS have been addressed. Additional information was provided both in the FEIS, and in the Forest Service’s response to our comments, that satisfies concerns the Agency had regarding potential impacts on downstream users, when new AMPs and grazing permits will be updated, recent private land purchases within the project area, and the determining of AUMs.

EPA commends the Forest Service for a modification made to the proposed project in the Record of Decision that should address the issue of greatest concern to the Agency, the effects of the Martin Basin grazing allotments on water quality and the recovery of the Lahontan cutthroat trout. Establishing a 10 percent maximum stream bank disturbance criterion for all streams inhabited by Lahontan cutthroat trout is a

crucial mitigation measure that should increase the trout's population in the Martin Basin Rangeland Project area.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Jason Gerdes, the lead reviewer for this project. Jason can be reached at (415) 947-4221 or gerdes.jason@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office (CED-2)