

RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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September 15, 2021

Attn: Chair Keith Gilles
Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Chair Gilles:

As an advisory body to the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board), the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) is specifically responsible for providing counsel on matters affecting the conservation, management, and use of grassland, oak woodland/savannah, brushland, and other grazed ecosystems in the State.

Over the past several decades, the difficulty that some state agencies have had in developing GSA-acceptable grazing licenses for purposes of managing vegetation on state lands has become an often-revisited topic of concern at RMAC's public meetings. The State Forests were recently offered an example license to use for developing their own, and it was found by several licensed CRMs to be seriously flawed and deficient as a mechanism for ensuring the proper use of grazing for environmental management.. State agencies and private industry have faced recurrent difficulties in developing, attracting bidders, and implementing grazing licenses across lands in State Responsibility Areas (SRA). Recent presentations by a manager at the Jackson State Demonstration Forest regarding grazing on and around the parcel, highlighted areas where improvements to grazing licenses and management plans are critical to the success of grazing management and ecological outcomes on forested and other SRAs that could benefit from grazing. Additionally, repeated calls at RMAC meetings for a more transparent, streamlined, and straight-forward process, including improvements to the structure of state grazing licenses, have prompted RMAC members and stakeholders to suggest actions to address these urgent needs in the State.

The Board and CAL FIRE work together to carry out the legislative mandates to protect and enhance the state's wildland resources, and to that end, objectives have been formed to increase the pace and scale of fuels treatments across the State. The CalVTP (Vegetation Treatment Program) includes several tools for fuels treatments, including the use of prescribed herbivory (grazing), to manage vegetation and mitigate fire risk. Constraints and difficulties in the use of prescribed herbivory in SRAs, however, frequently limit the well-managed application of grazing in high risk fire-prone areas, particularly in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

To address these constraints and disconnects between grazing license stipulations and the feasibility of implementing provisions in these licenses, the RMAC requests the Board's direction in the following endeavors:

- Formation of a subcommittee of representatives composed of appointees from the RMAC membership; range-science experts, land managers, and grazing operators (e.g., Certified Rangeland Managers, range management consultants, and researchers) from industry, academia (e.g., universities, U.C. Cooperative Extension), and state agencies (e.g., California Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Parks); the State Department of General Services; and other related agencies;
- Development of templates for state grazing licenses and accompanying Grazing Management Plans; and,
- Development of a guidebook guiding grazing operators (bidders), land managers, and other personnel involved in the application process, and development, implementation, and monitoring of compliance with grazing licenses and management plans.

We hope to minimize extra work on the part of your staff so far as possible, and these efforts would be primarily facilitated by the individuals forming the subcommittee. The RMAC seeks to maintain effective collaborations with state agencies in order to ensure a future with healthy, productive wildlands in California, and believes these efforts are critical to the sustainable management of these systems, and in particular, in the collective efforts to reduce severe and devastating wildfire across the State.

Sincerely,



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