



News Release

**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland**
<http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>

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Situation Assessment Underway for Prairie Dog Management

(LARAMIE, Wyo.) March 26, 2015 – The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has engaged the University of Wyoming, Ruckelshaus Institute to conduct a Situation Assessment of prairie dog management on the Thunder Basin National Grassland.

Staff from the Ruckelshaus Institute will be conducting in-depth, one-on-one interviews over the next few weeks with approximately 40 individuals from a wide range of interested parties and community representatives. Upon completion of the interviews, the Ruckelshaus Institute will compile a report and present it to the Forest Service for their use, as well as for public information.

Grassland officials are optimistic that the assessment will provide detailed information about stakeholder perceptions of prairie dog issues, management, and public participation in that process.

The USFS is contemplating the potential development of a long-term collaborative working group to help develop local, place-based options for prairie dog management. Information from the situation assessment would be key in the establishment of that group. This approach by the USFS parallels the recently released final report from the Governor's Task Force on Forests, which recommends creation of local collaborative working groups to address local forest management issues.

According to new Forest Supervisor Dennis Jaeger, understanding and exploring options to address prairie dog management is a priority.

"We believe that this situation assessment will help clarify the issues in what appears to me to be a very complicated topic," said Jaeger. "I need to be as informed as possible about prairie dog management, so that when it comes time to make decisions, I can do so with as much background, science, and with as many objective facts as I can get."

"Collaborative groups are a powerful tool and we think that this might be an excellent situation for the creation of one. We want to use the relationships that have already been established and create new ones to find workable solutions."

"Our goal is to ensure the public has a voice in land management decisions and to improve the quality of those decisions."

For more information about this process, contact the Douglas District Ranger at (307) 358-4690.

The University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources has a history of assisting agencies with difficult land and resource management issues, most recently facilitating the Governor's Task Force on Forests.

Dr. Jessica Clement, who directs the Collaborative Program in Natural Resources, has been involved in wildlife issues in Wyoming for almost ten years, including mule deer issues on the Wyoming Range and in the Platte Valley. Jessica can be reached at (307) 766- 5048 or jessica.clement@uwyo.edu with any questions regarding UW's involvement in this project.

The Ruckelshaus Institute's collaborative solutions program supports natural resource stakeholders, policy makers, and managers in making decisions about the future.

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