



# UPDATES AND RESOLUTION ON IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Thunder Basin Collaboration, December 7, 2017





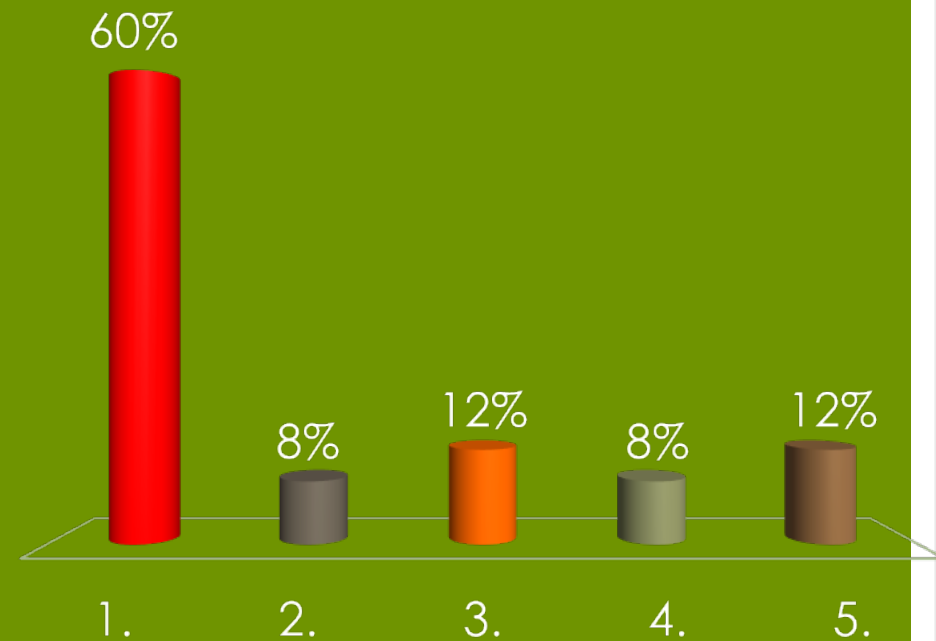
# Levels of Comfort

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.

# Test: Do you believe in red-nosed reindeer?



1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Option 1: Amend Current Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy

Regardless of whether the Forest Plan is amended, update Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy in 2018 so it is tied to State plans to not reintroduce Black-footed Ferrets in the short run. Create clear management goals and implementations of the current plan.

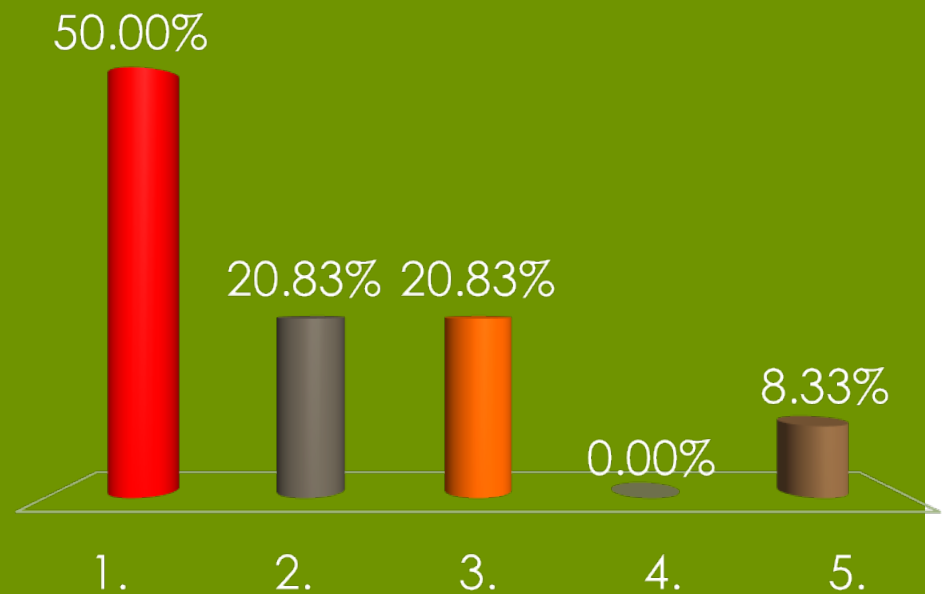
Include issues raised in Option 2 and 3 to the extent possible without a Plan Amendment.



# Option 1: Amend Current Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy

Regardless of whether Plan is amended, update Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy in 2018 so it is tied to State plans to not reintroduce Black-footed Ferrets in the short run. Create clear management goals and implementations of the current plan. Include issues raised in Option 2 and 3 to the extent possible without a Plan Amendment.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 1

- There's nothing to tie statewide plan to at this point in time
- Would like to take out language regarding short-term reintroduction
- Strategy doesn't differentiate between short and long-term ferret plans
- Would support change in strategy but not plan amendment
- Change language to introduction (not reintroduction)
- Rewrite to state that strategy should follow state plans
- Remove second part of first sentence about ferrets (after "plans")
- Like leaving ferret language in to make sure folks understand there will be no reintroduction in the short-term
- It's not clear what folks are voting on. Bullets appear contradictory.



# Option 2: "Address Density Management in Strategy in 2018"

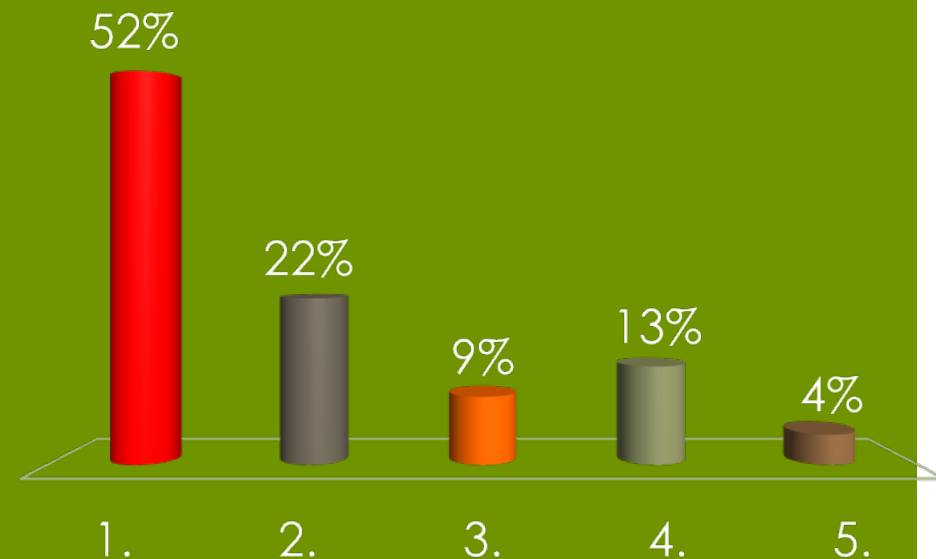
Do strips throughout towns to keep numbers down, break up large complexes, continue to allow shooting, add more rodenticide options, make a decision of acceptable density/acres, create a set of protocols – use same standards across all lands, need definitions for complexes vs. colonies, use the same definition of "density/acre" across all lands, associated species counts – measure the same inside and outside categories".



## Option 2: "Address Density management in Strategy in 2018

Do strips throughout towns to keep numbers down, break up large complexes, continue to allow shooting, add more rodenticide options, make a decision of acceptable density/acres, create a set of protocols – use same standards across all lands, need definitions for complexes vs. colonies, use the same definition of "density/acre" across all lands, associated species counts – measure the same inside and outside categories".

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.







# Comments on Option 2

- Wildlife and associated spp need a spot without density control, okay to have density control in some areas, density is hard to measure
- There is a lot in here: need to talk about specific bullets and come up with agreed upon protocol
- Other species are managed for density, prairie dogs should be too
- Possible to measure density but resource intensive, hard to do at full scale
- ~4-5 days on 4,400 acres to measure density on CCAA (1% of each colony for UWFWS standards, transects on ATV, count active and inactive mounds, active burrow density used to infer prairie dogs per acre)
- Would like to see density studies in other areas as well
- Manage for rangeland health as an indicator (rather than focusing just on density)



# Option 3: Location of Prairie Dog Towns

Under 2018 Strategy revision, new prairie dog core areas based on impacted land. If categories are being revisited, look at bottom-up approach.

Where we want prairie dogs: areas that are already impacted because we can't afford restoring them.

Where we don't want prairie dogs: preserve healthy lands and not accept prairie dogs.

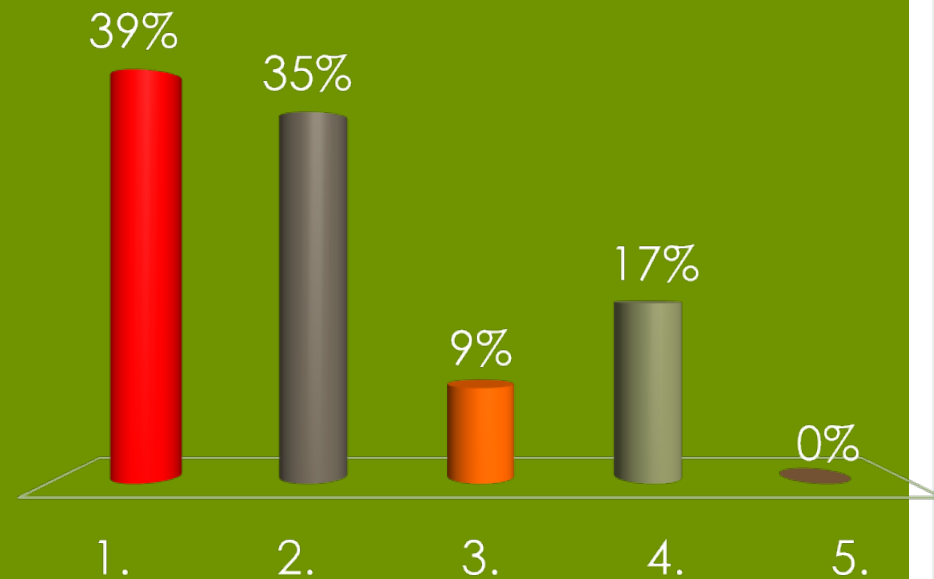


Option 3: Under 2018 Strategy revision determine new prairie dog core areas based on impacted land. If categories are being revisited, look at bottom-up approach.

Where we want prairie dogs: areas that are already impacted because can't afford restoring them.

Where we don't want prairie dogs: preserve healthy lands and not accept prairie dogs.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 3

- Language is conflicting and confusing. What is the questions actually asking? (Core areas vs categories)
- Prairie dogs recolonize naturally without our help
- Change to “reestablish/determine category areas”, take out the word “new”
- Add language regarding buffer zones. Look at lethal and non-lethal tools for establishing buffers.
- Is this new areas within the category or outside the category?
- Change language to “complex”, no need to redetermine category designations
- Determine complexes within categories
- What is the definition of a complex versus a colony?
  - UWFWS has definitions the group can use



# Option 4: Balanced forage management for livestock and wildlife

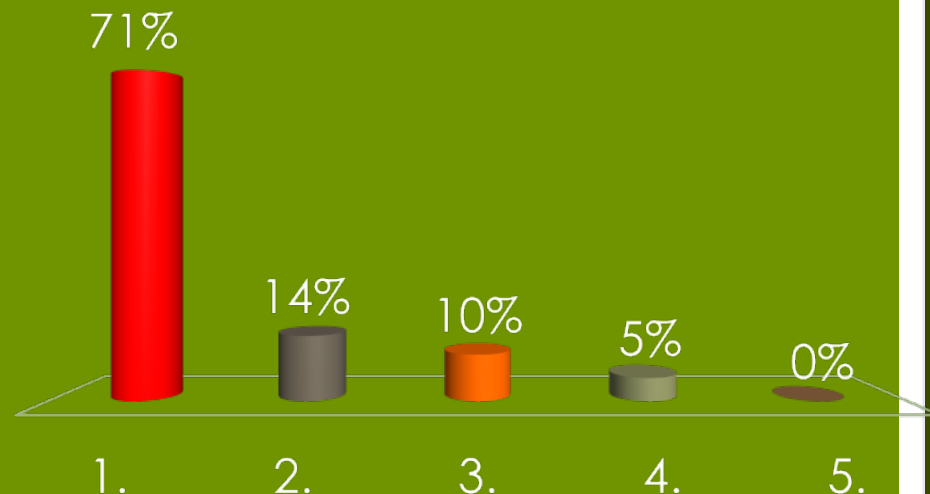
- Balance forage management and competition of livestock and wildlife through Leniency and flexibility for innovative approaches to vegetation treatments and
- \*Continued prairie dog control
- \*Invasive species control incl. cheat grass
- \*Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones)
- Reduce erosion through prairie dog management
- Remove cactus, three-awn, cheat-grass, and mounds
- Reseed



## Option 4: Balance forage management and competition of livestock and wildlife through leniency and flexibility for innovative approaches to vegetation treatments and:

- Continued prairie dog control.
- Invasive species control incl. cheat grass.
- Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones).
- Reduce erosion through prairie dog management.
- Remove cactus, three-awn, cheat-grass, and mounds.
- Reseed.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments to CWG

- Every colony is different, so methods can't be applied uniformly across all areas
- Cactus takes several years to disappear after being sprayed
- Specific projects will be determined on smaller scales. Option is a general statement about what the group conceptually agrees or does not agree upon.
- Sagebrush restoration is a lengthy process



# Option 5: Sagebrush Ecosystems

- Keep the sagebrush we have and not allow them to transition to riparian or mesic communities. Do this by doing the following:
- Identify species usage to determine areas that will use annual plant community
- Identify areas of erosion concern
- Control cheat grass
- Remove all prairie dogs within sage grouse core area





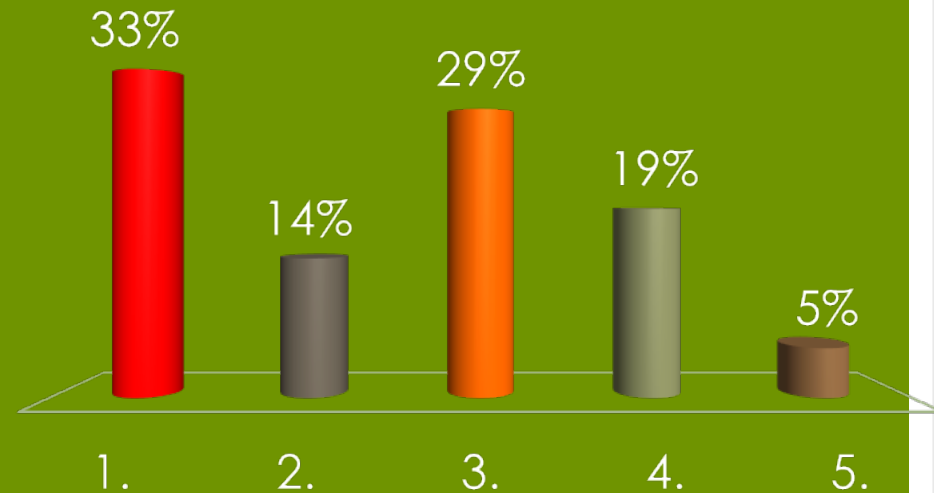
## Option 5: Sagebrush Ecosystems

Keep the sagebrush we have and do not allow prairie dogs to transition into riparian or mesic communities.

Do this by doing the following:

- Identify species usage to determine areas that will use annual plant community
- Identify areas of erosion concern
- Control cheat grass
- Remove all prairie dogs within sage grouse core area

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments to CWG

- Remove "remove all prairie dogs from sage grouse core area"
- There's no science to show that there shouldn't be prairie dogs in sage grouse core areas
- Conflicting management in core sage grouse areas. The standard for sage grouse is 7 inches of stubble height. Prairie dogs can decrease stubble height.
- Sage grouse take precedence over prairie dogs because of listing potential
- Some think all prairie dogs should be eliminated in core areas, others don't
- Prairie dogs and sage grouse can coexist outside of core areas
- Perhaps both species can coexist if prairie dogs are maintained at low densities
- Three ongoing research projects regarding this topic



# Option 6: Full and Transparent Communications

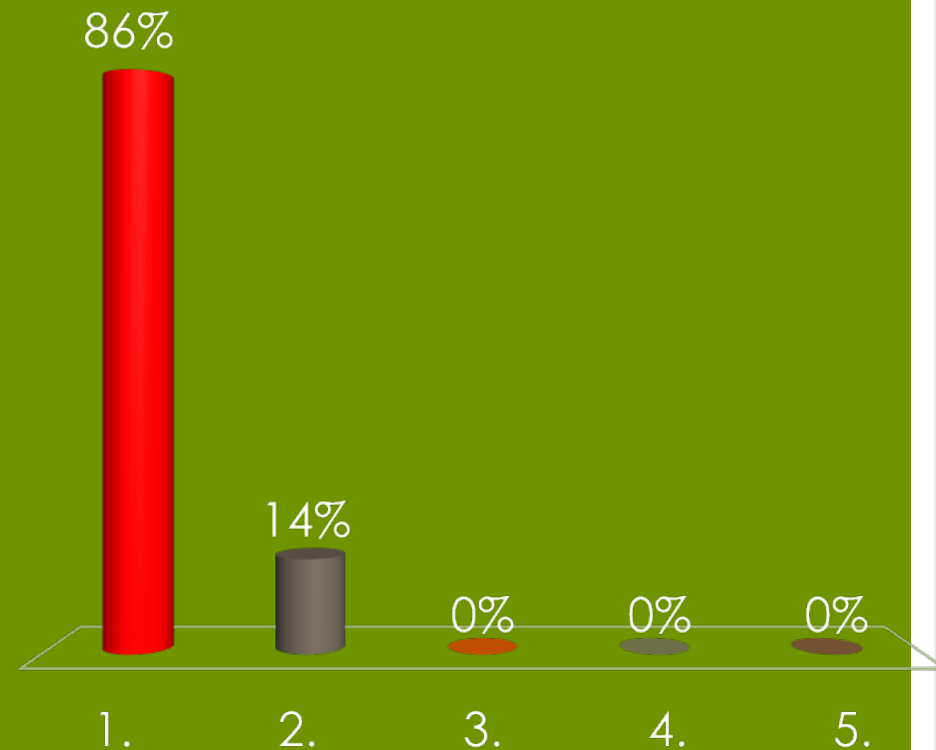
- \*Improve and develop more consistent communication and distribution between meetings.



## Option 6: Full and Transparent Communications.

Improve and develop more consistent communication and distribution between meetings.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 6

- Will this effort continue in 2018?
  - This is up to the group
  - Jess is contracted for one more year
  - USFS is looking for input on next steps
  - USFS committed to a collaborative process
- Should the CWG continue?
  - Process has been slow, but starting to see results
  - Made a mistake switching to 1-day meetings
  - Not adequate conservation representation on CWG (can format/structure be changed to address this?)
  - Need better representation of constituents on CWG
  - Need to understand that USFS has final decision-making ability
  - Permittees and landowners should have a voice at the table
  - Suggestion: have an open meeting, but members of CWG are allowed to “vote” at those open meetings while public is not
  - Another (non-federal agency) group can convene so that they can have an open group
  - USFS can create MOUs that speak to their ability to commit to recommendations, etc.
  - USFS can't funnel money to other organizations to convene (but USFS can check on this)
  - Could several organization contribute money to convene these meetings?
  - Would like to see county commissioners convene



# Option 7: Full and Transparent Communications

Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs.

- Include TBGPEA, private landowner and USFS data
- Monitor and inventory range conditions, ground cover

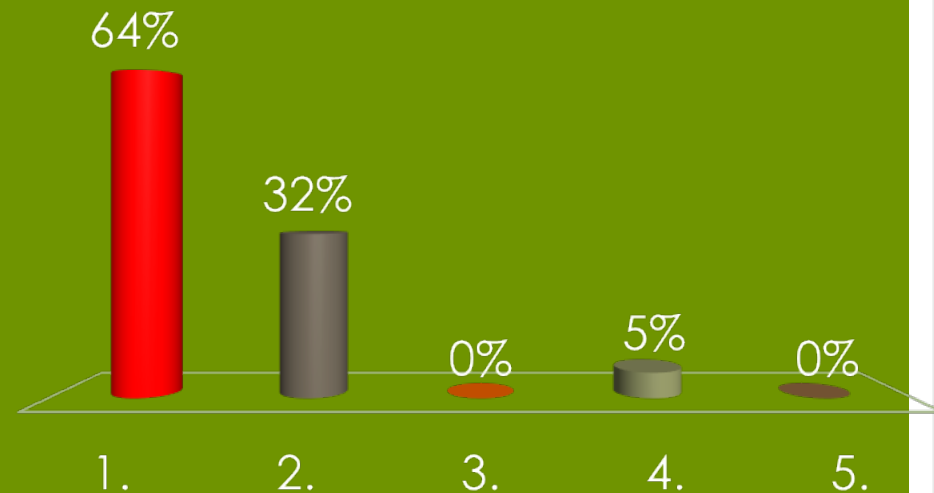


## Option 7: Full and Transparent Communications

Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs.

- Include TBGPEA, private landowner and USFS data
- Monitor and inventory range conditions, ground cover

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments to CWG

- Include UW.
- It's important to share data, and it should be provided at each meeting
- Take into consideration legalities of sharing private landowner data





# Option 8: Funding

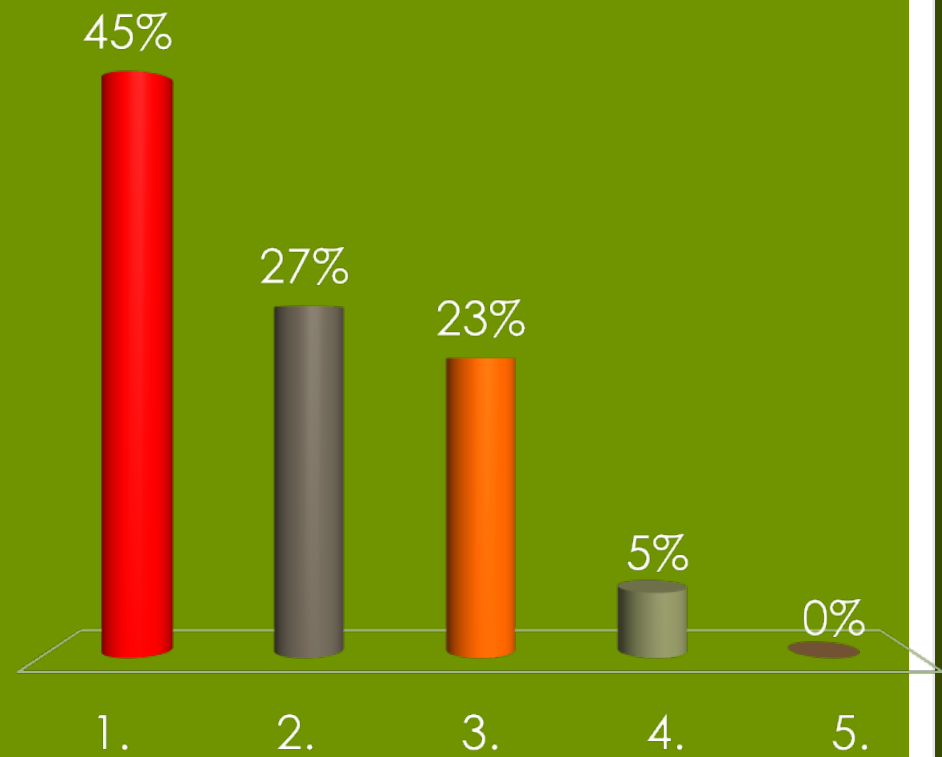
- Work with partners to find and manage a point person to find long-term and consistent funding.



## Option 8: Funding

Work with partners to find and manage a point person to find long-term and consistent funding.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 8

- More comfortable with everyone working together to find funding, rather than having just one person
- Language is regarding one person to coordinate the money, not just to find the money
- Look at Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative model for securing funds
- Transparency regarding where money comes from
- This would allow the group to have matching funds
- What are funds being gathered for? Implementing the plan?



# Option 9: Thunder Basin Collaborative Goal

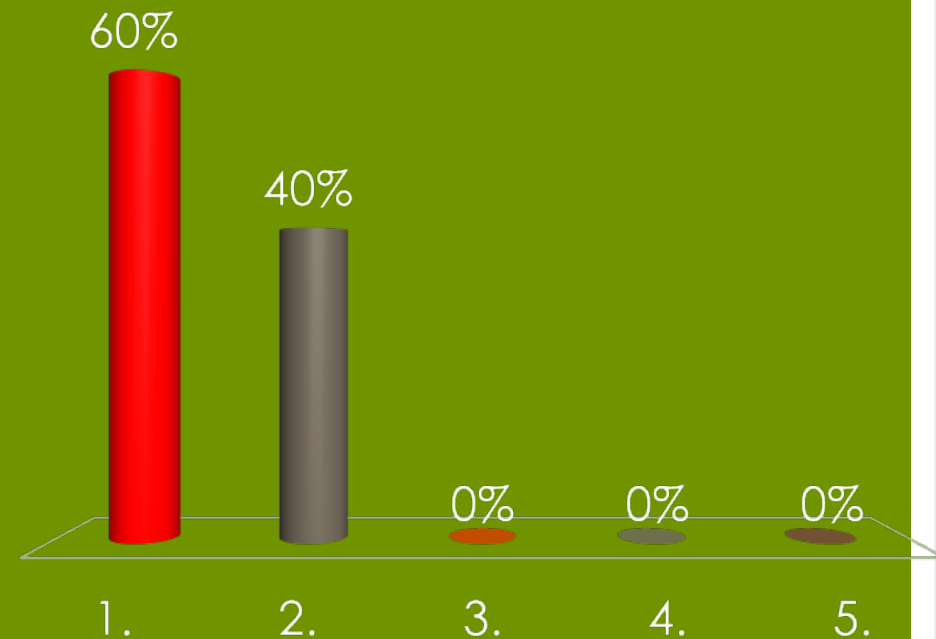
“Prairie dog management to a level that supports healthy landscape and permittees, while supporting associated species through personal relationships and a respect for all goals and viewpoints” .



## Option 9: Collaborative Goal regarding Prairie Dog Management:

“Prairie dog management to a level that supports healthy landscape and permittees, while supporting associated species through personal relationships and a respect for all goals and viewpoints” .

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 9

- Switch word order of permittees and healthy landscape



# Option 10: Role of the USFS in Prairie Dog Management

Request that the USFS commits to following through on management and regulatory obligations including:

- Following USFS plans
- Any new plans must be fiscally responsible 2012 FS planning regulations
- LRMP revision is long overdue
- Providing an answer regarding whether there will be a USFS Plan amendment.
- Allowing ground-ready projects to move forward and provide reasons when they cannot.
- Adhere to the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960
- Reduce impairment of productivity of the land as per the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1937.

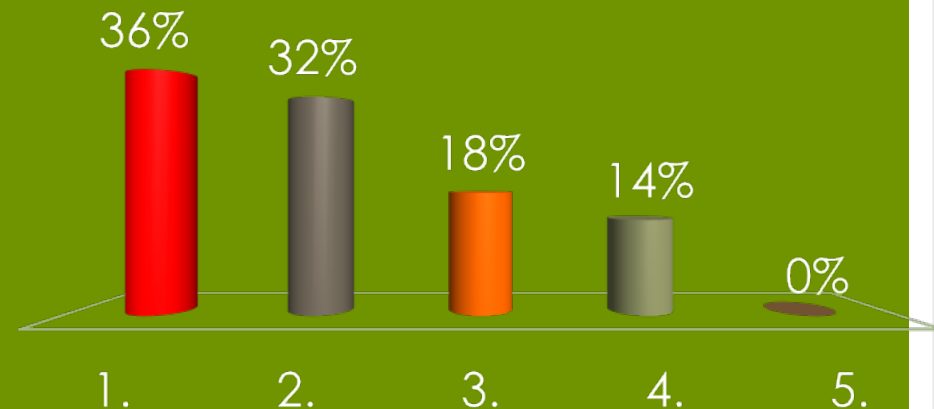


## Option 10: Role of the USFS in Prairie Dog Management

Request that the USFS commits to following through on management and regulatory obligations including:

- Following USFS plans
- Any new plans must be fiscally responsible 2012 FS planning regulations
- LRMP revision is long overdue
- Providing an answer regarding whether there will be a USFS Plan amendment.
- Allowing ground-ready projects to move forward and providing reasons when they cannot.
- Adhering to the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960
- Reducing impairment of productivity of the land as per the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1937.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.







# Comments on Option 10

- Likes the part about following through on plans, especially those that were made collaborative
- Add: "Making decisions in a timely manner and notifying parties in advance of implementation"
- Need clarification on who's the lead on issues and concerns
- Have equal representation of viewpoints on field trips
- Squeamish about LRMP revision; work backwards through strategy and then take it back to plan to see what's needed
- USFS revisit regulations
- Stick to LRMP revision 15-year schedule
- Amendment process pulls resources from on-the-ground efforts
- Want to assurances that strategy will be fully implemented
- Identify what has and hasn't been implemented in current strategy
- USFS perspective: plan revision not on table, amendment possible



# Option 11

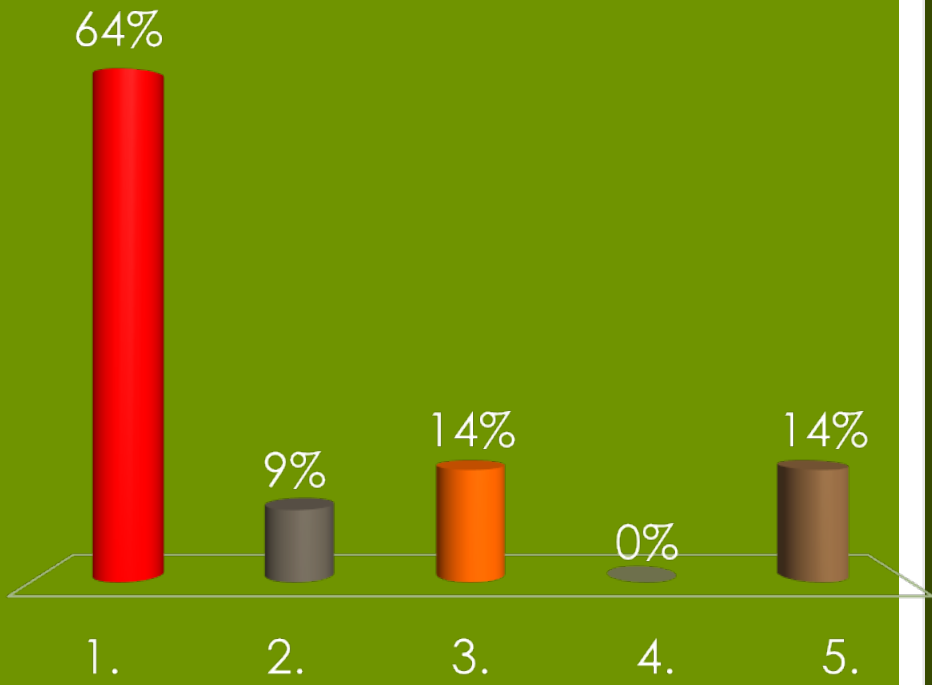
- Seek clarification of prairie dog as pest or sensitive species at state and federal levels and comply with State Weed and Pest laws (i.e., prairie dog is a pest) accordingly.



## Option 11:

Seek clarification of prairie dog as pest or sensitive species at state and federal levels and comply with State Weed and Pest laws (i.e., prairie dog is a pest) accordingly.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 11

- Need to avoid additional federal listings
- USDA Wildlife Services not a regulatory agency: does prairie dog removals and plague mitigation
- WGFD designates p dogs as SGCNs, State considers a pest
- No Rozol per Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)
  - Others want Rozol
- Thinks we can find solutions despite conflicting designations
- Discuss or allow the use of burrow fumigants in control efforts
- Break option into two parts. Have a separate statement about using most effective method to control prairie dogs. Move this to Option 13



# Option 12: Prairie dog Monitoring

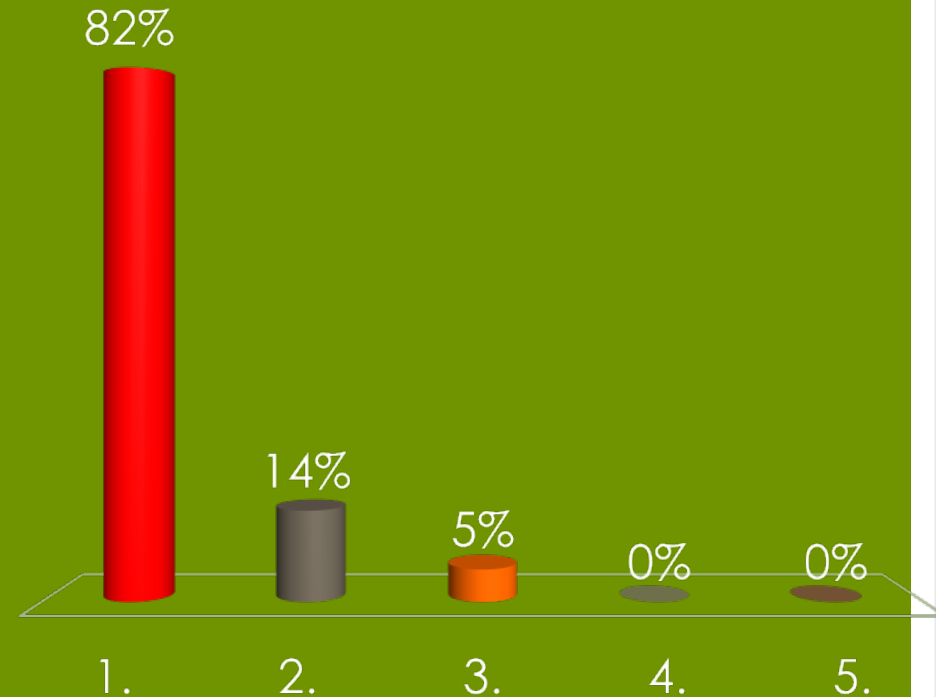
- Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague



# Option 12: Prairie Dog Monitoring

## Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 12

- none



# Option 13: Prairie Dog Boundary Management

\*Manage 3.63 area's boundaries

- Eliminations of prairie dogs outside the boundary
- Prevent prairie dogs establishing outside the boundary.

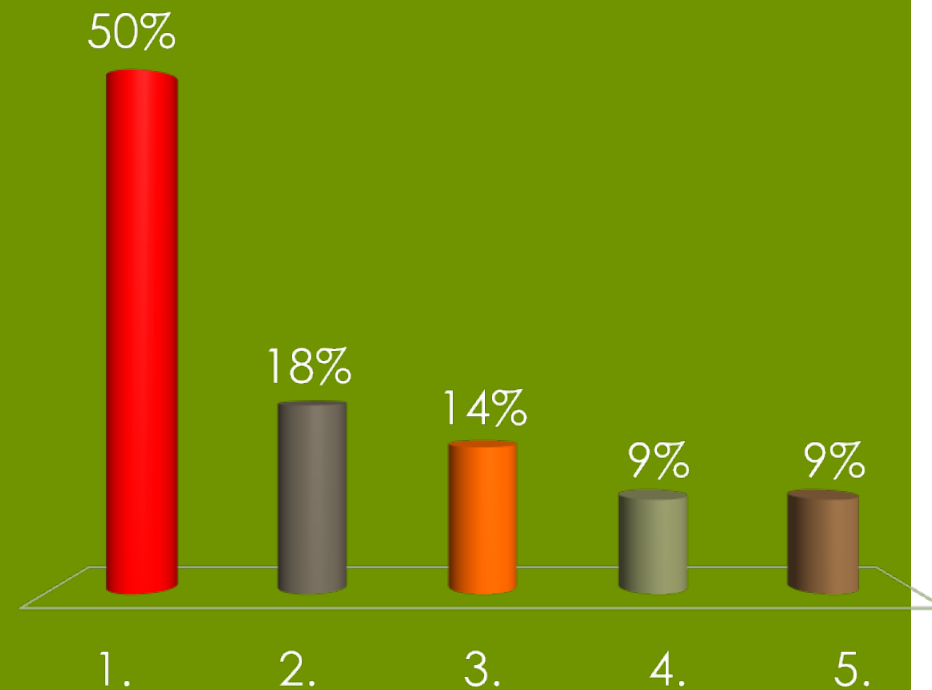


# Option 13: Prairie Dog Boundary Management

Manage 3.63 area's boundaries by:

- Eliminating prairie dogs outside the boundary
- Prevent prairie dogs establishing outside the boundary.

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.



# Comments on Option 13

- Statement should be about Category 1, not 3.63
- Want boundaries managed, but not eliminating p dogs outside of boundary
- Better management of boundaries to minimize the number of p dogs outside of boundary
- Would like to incorporate density into this statement. Need density control within boundary
- Get rid of 3.63 so we can manage p dogs everywhere
- Need to maintain two complexes with no control, can do experiments with density control in other areas of category one (southeast portion: Lone Crow)
- Want to see some management within Category 1
- Possibly move lessee to a different pasture or compensate; consider the landowner
  - There could be economic incentives for these landowners (conservation groups working on this)
- Focus on healthy rangelands, diversity of animals, look at ecosystem level



# Option 14: Prairie Dog Shooting

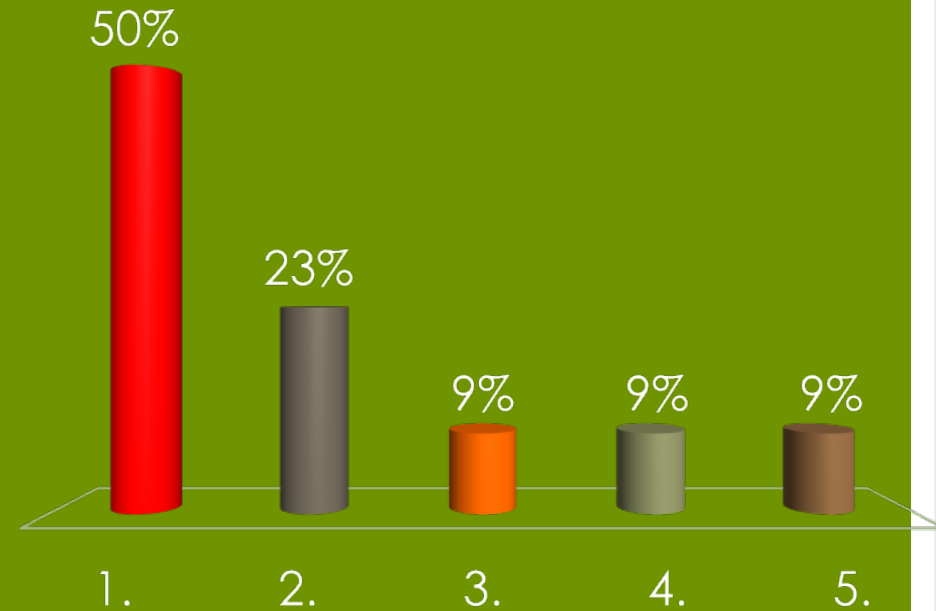
- Permanently drop no shooting ban starting Fall 2017. Recreational shooting should remain everywhere (compare lead versus steel bullets)



## Option 14: Prairie Dog Shooting

Permanently drop no shooting ban starting Fall 2017.  
Recreational shooting should remain everywhere  
(compare lead versus steel bullets)

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.





# Comments on Option 14

- Change “steel” to “non-toxic”
- No shooting within Category 1 areas (this would be consistent with the current plan)
- Ban shooting in Category 1 if/when it becomes possible to reintroduce ferrets
- Don’t require or ban specific tools, be flexible and adapt management tools
- There is some “bycatch” of associated species in areas that allow shooting
- Shooting is especially attractive if there are lots of prairie dogs
- Shooting is one form of recreation use on the grassland
- Want triggers put in place regarding when and where shooting is and isn’t allowed
- How many p dogs do recreational shooters kill each year? Is there any harm in shooting if there are ferrets (since they’re nocturnal)?
  - On 4W, one shooter shot 450 p dogs in a day



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year  
from the Ruckelshaus Institute.

