



Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado



Dear Friends:

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the removal of trespass livestock, including but not limited to cattle and horses, from Mesa Verde National Park in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Park does not have legal authority to allow livestock use in the park. According to federal regulations at 36 CFR 2.60, “The running-at-large, herding, driving across, allowing on, pasturing or grazing of livestock of any kind in a park area or the use of a park area for agricultural purposes is prohibited.” Mesa Verde National Park does not have any reserved rights associated with livestock use and it is not designated as a necessary and integral part of the Park’s recreational activities or historic scene. The horses in the park are not protected under the 1971 Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA) and the National Park Service is not one of the agencies designated to manage horses under the WFRHBA. The Park’s only legal authority is to remove trespassing livestock.

The NPS will evaluate a number of methods for capturing and removing trespass livestock from the Park in a humane manner and in compliance with NPS policies and regulations. As part of the project, the Park would also install, modify and maintain fencing to prevent future migration of livestock into the Park.

The EA will analyze impacts on topics such as, but not limited to, cultural resources, vegetation, soils, wildlife, water resources, wilderness, and visitor use and experience.

We invite you to participate in the planning process by submitting ideas for removing trespassing livestock and identifying issues of concern. We hope you will join us in this important discussion regarding the future of your public lands by submitting comments.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the development of the Livestock Removal EA.

Sincerely,

Superintendent

History

Mesa Verde National Park was designated in 1906 to preserve, research, and interpret the archeological sites and other works and relics of prehistoric inhabitants in its boundaries. Trespass livestock, which enter into the Park from adjacent properties, have been prohibited in the Park since 1908. Currently there are approximately 80 horses and 12 head of cattle that are distributed throughout the Park. Since the 1930's, the NPS has constructed and maintained fencing along the Park's boundary, but livestock continue to enter and multiply in the Park.

Purpose of and Need for the Environmental Assessment

This EA will analyze removing trespassing livestock from the Park. The purpose of the proposed action is to remove livestock from the Park and to prevent them from re-entering. Livestock need to be removed because Mesa Verde National Park does not have the legal authority to allow livestock use in the Park. Existing Park programs and practices, including maintaining existing fencing along the Park boundary, have not been effective at removing livestock from the Park. The number of trespass livestock, particularly horses, in the Park has increased in the past 20 years. Capturing and removing trespass livestock from the Park would be done humanely and would comply with NPS policies and regulations.



Livestock means any species of animal that has been selectively bred by humans for domestic and agricultural purposes including but not limited to cattle, sheep, horses, burros, mules, goats and swine.



Preliminary Alternative Ideas

The Park is requesting suggestions from the public on various ways to remove trespass livestock and prevent future trespassing along with any issues or concerns. These ideas will be incorporated into the different alternatives that will be analyzed in the EA. An alternative is defined as a reasonable way to fix the identified problem or satisfy the stated need. Within the alternatives, the Park will also analyze the No Action alternative. The No Action Alternative would continue current programs and practices. This would include maintaining existing fencing along the Park's boundary. Some preliminary alternative ideas for the proposed project (outside of the No Action alternative) are as follows:

- Capture, removal and exclusion: wrangler round-up, baited pen capture, fencing, fertility control, etc.
- Post removal holding: on site or off site areas
- Post removal placement: public sale, private sale, adoption, donation etc.

How to Comment

You are invited to submit comments on what the EA should address and analyze. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail are most useful. Substantive comments do one or more of the following:

- Present information that can be used when developing alternatives
- Present reasonable alternatives
- Present information that can be used when the NPS considers impacts of alternatives
- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in an existing report

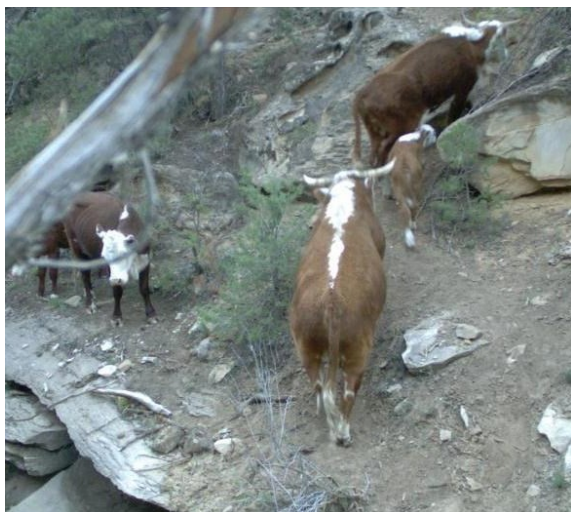
Comments that are not substantive and cannot be considered include:

- Comments in favor of or against an action without any reasoning (such as “I don’t like ____” without rationale)
- Comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy
- Comments without justification or supporting data (such as “allow less grazing”)
- Comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions

Submit comments online at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/meve_livestock. Please submit comments by **January 8, 2015**.

Be aware that your entire comment including personal identifying information may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, the National Park Service cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

If you wish to receive future updates on this project, please send an email to meve_livestock_removal@nps.gov and include your email address. Public comments will not be accepted at this email address. The mailing list will be used solely to communicate information related to the Mesa Verde Livestock Removal EA.



Project Timeline

Below is the project timeline. Opportunities for public involvement are highlighted in green.

Planning Phase	Estimated Completion Timeframe
Analyze Constraints	November - December 2015
Public Scoping/Comment Analysis	December 2015 - January 2016
Develop Preliminary Alternatives	Winter 2015/2016
Refine Alternatives	Winter 2015/2016
Develop Environmental Assessment	Winter 2015/2016
Publish Environmental Assessment	Spring 2016
Public Comment Analysis/Response	Summer 2016
Publish NEPA Decision	Fall 2016

← *Current phase*

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