

OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT:

The Forest Service is opening a comment period for the **MLSNF SZ Hydrologic Function Rehabilitation and Restoration**.

PROJECT DETAILS

LOCATION:

The proposed project is located within the Manti-La Sal National Forest on the Moab and Monticello Ranger Districts within Grand, San Juan, Mesa, and Montrose counties. The proposed actions will be open for implementation on all NFS lands, specifically to the following features: springs, streams, wetlands, and uplands within the Moab & Monticello Districts. Anthropogenic systems such as canals and ditches will be within the exclusion zone for any proposed treatments. Areas with conflicting water rights and special uses will be avoided.

PURPOSE AND NEED:

The Manti-La Sal National Forests' Land & Resource Management Plan identifies the forest-wide plan components of watershed health as one of the primary drivers of management actions. Past practices, uses and natural events have, in places, degraded water ways and their associated (affected) habitats or riparian areas. This degradation limits watershed function, water quality/quantity and biological integrity. Many practices or restoration techniques are available to treat degradations and have been heavily utilized in the past. Some of these restoration techniques involve the use of exclusion fencing to protect wetlands, springs, and streams from excessive impacts; grade stabilization structures to stabilize or restore the grade of slopes to previous levels; beaver dam analogs (BDA's) to restore gradient, velocity, aquatic habitat, and to provide downstream users more water throughout the season; and other techniques.

The purpose of these varied treatments is to move toward Forest Plan desired conditions for soil, water and aquatic resources. The need for each site-specific installation is based on professional observation of degraded soil and water features across the Moab and Monticello Ranger Districts (South Zone).

A few specific examples of where these practices can be most useful are:

- In fire scars like Pack Creek during the post-fire recovery phase where treatments to reduce erosion and runoff are most important
- In the upland setting where cumulative impacts from grazing, climate, and erosive soils have resulted in rilling, nick-points, and gullies.
- At the intersection of roads/trails and water sources where impacts from vehicles and/or recreationists are causing unfavorable water quality/quantity impacts.
- At spring sources where hummocking has resulted in a loss of riparian vegetation and a decrease in the water table.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

When needed and appropriate, restoration techniques will be implemented in areas with degradation. Restoration treatments may include, but are not limited to:

1. Streams, Springs, and Wetlands

- a. Cattle enclosure fencing, j-hooks, cross-vanes, beaver damn analogs (BDA's), post-assisted log structures (PALS), gabions, debris-flow mitigation, reestablishment of native aquatic vegetation, and repairing of roads/trails to improve aquatic habitat.
2. Uplands
 - a. Gully and rill stabilization structures (Zeedyk, Zuni Bowl, etc.), reestablishment of native vegetation, overland-flow erosion mitigation (one-rock dams, wattles, Media Luna), and repairing of roads to improve aquatic habitat.

RESEARCH/EDUCATION:

For some educational videos on what is being proposed, please view any of the links below:

[Restoring streams post-fire with low-tech structures in Idaho - YouTube](#)

[Building Like Beavers - YouTube](#)

[What is a Headcut and How Does One Form? - YouTube](#)

[Zuni Bowl - Zeedyk Structures - YouTube](#)

USGS's [article](#) on the methods of preventing desertification and recovering from drought.

[Low-Tech Process Based Restoration](#)

PROGRAMMATIC PHASED APPROACH:

In order to meet the priorities and objectives of the forest's plan of work, implementation will be broken down into annual phases to allow for funding and project specific environmental compliance. The duration of this project will last ten years, starting in 2023 and ending in 2032.

DESIGN FEATURES:

In addition to Forest Plan standards and guidelines designed to mitigate impacts, the following measures would be used. These design features have been incorporated by the Forest Service to reduce or prevent undesirable effects resulting from proposed management activities.

1. A newly identified site-specific project is to be proposed and presented during a USFS interdisciplinary meeting approximately one year prior to implementation in order to allow time to complete Section 106, ESA, and Tribal consultation and required permitting.
2. The forest service will collaborate with interested parties. Collaboration could include site visits, phone calls, emails, and/or letters to document areas of degradation.
3. The forest service, when appropriate and when in need, will work with interested parties to develop volunteer days to assist in the implementation of projects.
4. Only materials from the immediate local area (on Forest) will be used for implementation, with the exception of the materials required to achieve objectives.
5. Structures will be located only in areas previously identified as having no historic properties present and consulted on as determined by the Forest's Heritage Program.
6. For BDA's in the vicinity of culverts, work with engineering program to ensure BDA construction will not affect culvert function or encourage blocking of culverts by beavers.
7. Utilize the Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT) or similar model to assess suitability, capability, and relative risk to infrastructure for stream reaches being proposed for BDA installation.

8. Consider excluding cattle for 2-3 years post-BDA implementation to allow for vegetation recovery and riparian vegetation establishment if possible. Evaluate livestock re-entry to the area with the Range Specialist, Hydrologist and Botanist.
9. Timing restriction for implementation will be determined through concurrent consultation on a project by project basis. Installation of in-stream structures will be during base flow conditions outside of determined timing restriction.
10. Follow all design features that result from SHPO and/or Tribal consultations.
11. Follow any other design features that are recommended by the IDT or counties if adjacent to roads under their jurisdiction.
12. Follow all ESA regulations and all plan components associated with sensitive species.
13. Follow permit conditions from CWA 404 nationwide permit.
14. Forest will obtain a temporary water right if installing Beaver Dam Analog.
15. For issues regarding roads, consult with the appropriate county road department on project specifics.
16. The categorical exclusion will have a duration of ten years, starting in 2023 and ending in 2032.
17. For any grazing exclusion fencing, collaboration with range specialists and associated permittees will occur.

APPLICABLE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CATEGORIES: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(7) - Modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native materials or normal practices. 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18) - Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.; 36 CFR 220.6(e)(19) - Removing and/or relocating debris and sediment following disturbance events (such as floods, hurricanes, tornados, mechanical/ engineering failures, etc.) to restore uplands, wetlands, or riparian systems to pre-disturbance conditions, to the extent practicable, such that site conditions will not impede or negatively alter natural processes.; 36 CFR 220.6(e)(20) - Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, including unauthorized roads and trails and National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails to a more natural condition that may include removing, replacing, or modifying drainage structures and ditches, reestablishing vegetation, reshaping natural contours and slopes, reestablishing drainage-ways, or other activities that would restore site productivity and reduce environmental impacts

HOW TO COMMENT:

Respond directly to me: daniel.c.lay@usda.gov

Or if you'd rather provide written comments, they should be submitted to:

Daniel Lay, Hydrologist
Moab Ranger District
62 East 100 North, P.O. Box 386
Moab, UT 84532.

Comments submitted by email should have the subject line of **MLSNF SZ Hydrologic Function Rehabilitation and Restoration**.

In the body of your message, please include your name, address, telephone number, organization represented (if any), and any comments or suggestions that would help the USFS better implement this project. For your comments to be helpful, please have them submitted by COB **August 26th, 2022**. Anyone who provides comments during this comment period will remain on the project mailing list throughout the project, and if interested, will have the opportunity to collaborate with the USFS through the entirety of the decision.

If you require more information, you may contact Daniel Lay, Team Lead, at the Moab Ranger District Office, phone: (435) 636-3547 or email: daniel.c.lay@usda.gov.

Thank you for your time,

Daniel Lay

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