



Wyoming
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture

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The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

October 12, 2020

Dr. Donald B.K English
Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources
Mailstop 125, Forest Service, USDA
1400 Independence Ave. SW,
Washington, DC 20250-1125

Dear Dr. English,

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) comments regarding United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) request for comment and information collection for national visitor use monitoring on USFS lands.

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life. As the proposed project could affect our industry, citizens, and natural resources it is important that you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide the opportunity to communicate pertinent issues and concerns.

We understand the USFS' desire to meet recreational interests by providing them with an experience of solitude and unspoiled landscapes. Recreation is an important industry for the State of Wyoming given the large tracts of public lands. The WDA serves as a Cooperating Agency with numerous USFS District Ranger offices across Wyoming and appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments regarding survey questions USFS personnel will ask visitors.

WDA is a strong proponent of the USFS multiple use mandate. As with many states across the West, recreation is just one of the many uses of USFS lands under the multiple use mandate. However, over the years, recreation and the need to ensure satisfaction of those recreating on public lands has increased exponentially, often at the detriment to other multiple uses, such as livestock grazing, logging, recreational shooting, etc.

Many of those who recreate on USFS lands are from other states and countries. These visitors may have a false sense of expectation when they arrive and may provide negative feedback regarding multiple uses, and their experience. We often hear concerns from mountain bikers, campers, hikers, or backpackers relayed through USFS staff regarding the overlap of use on active livestock grazing allotments. Concerns include, manure on trails, use of live water by livestock, sheep herder camps, guardian animals, and forage utilization.

The federal register notice states *"the data from this collection provides vital information for strategic planning efforts, decisions regarding allocation of resources, and revisions of land and resource management plans for national forests."* As a Cooperating Agency serving on current and future forest plan revisions, it is concerning how a simple questionnaire can negatively impact other uses and industries through a 30-year forest plan. Public lands grazing is just one of those uses under a forest plan. We want to emphasize the importance of public lands to the viability of ranching

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families who feed the nation by grazing their livestock and provide economic benefits to the local and national economies.

We urge the USFS to consider asking visitors more solution oriented questions to not only improve their experience, but to also reduce potential future conflicts of overlapping uses. One particular solution WDA is urging at the District Ranger offices across Wyoming is the development and inclusion of informational kiosks located at trailheads. The kiosk can explain the USFS multiple use mandates and provide specifics of what to expect regarding their recreational experience in a given area before leaving their vehicles and the trailhead. If recreationalists are overtly opposed to recreating in an active livestock grazing allotment, the kiosk can provide additional maps or brochures of different areas to recreate where livestock grazing are not permitted.

We respectfully request the USFS continue to include WDA in future development of the questionnaire and implementation of the analyzed data. We look forward to working with your staff on this project. If you have questions, please contact Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst at 307-777-7067.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto
Director

DM/jw

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
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