



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

October 26, 2016

Frank Romero
Laramie District Ranger
Medicine Bow National Forest
Laramie Ranger District
2468 Jackson St.
Laramie, WY 82070

Dear Mr. Romero,

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Pole Mountain Travel Management Project Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Laramie Ranger District of the Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF).

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this project impacts our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it is important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

WDA appreciates the MBNF's efforts to work closely with the public to address multiple-use, including off-highway vehicles (OHV), wildlife, livestock grazing, and recreation. We offer the following comments to the EA, which we urge the MBNF consider as part of the final decision.

Implement Additional Signage:

Livestock grazing is an important and historic use of the Pole Mountain area. Grazing permittees are intimately familiar with the area and the roads in the Travel Management Plan. Many of these roads are vital to properly manage their allotments including maintenance for stock tanks, water developments, and fences.

These roads are also used heavily by the public for recreation purposes, including OHV use. Grazing permittees are concerned with the negative environmental impacts caused by unauthorized OHV use. WDA understands the importance of providing opportunity for proper OHV use, while emphasizing the need to address negative impacts caused by OHVs throughout the Pole Mountain area.

WDA recommends increasing signage at the entrance of US Forest Service roads when the public enters off Happy Jack Road 210. These signs could provide information of areas open to OHVs, seasonal closures for wildlife and resource protection, as well as administratively closed roads. These signs could also provide information and pictures of the different type of road markers.

When a road or unauthorized road/trail is closed, WDA recommends an additional sign is placed at the beginning of the former entrance to provide the public information on why the trail or road is closed. As an example, where an unauthorized trail crosses an allotment or riparian area, the sign could potentially educate the public of long-time use, damage, and discourage additional unauthorized use. Similar methods could educate the public regarding seasonal

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closures for wildlife, including crucial winter range and parturition areas and how disturbance by motorized vehicles negatively impacts wildlife.

Consider Mitigation on New Trails:

WDA supports the opportunity for families to recreate and for younger OHV riders to participate. The EA identifies new OHV trails for 701 D and 701.GA, plus an additional new trail to merge the two from north to south. WDA and grazing permittees are concerned the proposed new OHV Trail will cross additional riparian areas and cause resource damage. WDA urges the MBNF consider how to mitigate the additional resource damage prior to approving any new trails. We would also support monitoring the area and ensure OHV riders do not create any additional unauthorized trails, and have an ability to address environmental damage in the early stages.

Work Closely with Grazing Permittees on Closures:

WDA along with grazing permittees support reducing the number of roads in Pole Mountain. The EA provides a number of closures with either decommissioning or kept as a Level I status, allowing administrative uses for livestock grazing permittees. Specifically the EA identifies three roads proposed for closure where grazing permittees could have concern due to the inability to access range improvements: 703.G, 712.A, and 701.GA.

We encourage MBNF to work closely with grazing permittees to determine if decommissioning or Level I is most appropriate. Specifically on 701.GA, the grazing permittees are concerned this closure would cause OHV riders to find new areas and create new trails not proposed or authorized by the MBNF. We support a seasonal closure for parturition areas, including signage at the entrance of the road systems to educate road users for the closure.

We understand the complexity of meeting multiple-uses and interests on Pole Mountain. We believe with on-going communication there is a solution to address environmental resource damage, improve wildlife habitat, allow livestock grazing management, while providing a wide array of recreation. We look forward to working closely with you as a Cooperating Agency. 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
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
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