



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

February 19, 2013

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests

Attn: Frank E. Romero
2468 Jackson Street
Laramie, WY 82070

Dear Mr. Romero,

Following are the comments of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the proposed Categorical Exclusion (CE) for an 80-acre prescribed fire on Bald Mountain in the Laramie Ranger District (LRD) of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest.

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.

The WDA understands the need to improve and restore the vegetative and age-class diversity of fire-adapted ecosystems. We support the LRD utilizing prescribed fire on Bald Mountain to remove decadent grasses and reduce fire hazard, while improving forage quality for livestock and wildlife.

While we support the LRD utilizing a CE for this small treatment area, we request you consider the duration of time needed before grazing can occur on treated areas, for both livestock and wildlife. We encourage cooperation and communication with the impacted grazing permittees to determine post-treatment grazing on a site specific basis, rather than adhering to a predetermined nationwide policy. Managed livestock use of the project area is encouraged at the first feasible opportunity.

We appreciate LRD's proactive approach to monitoring the proposed burn area, before and after treatment. Immediate and effective treatment of weeds post fire is crucial to the success of this project, and to the quality of forage for livestock and wildlife. We would appreciate LRD reviewing current stocking rates of domestic livestock on Bald Mountain and consider increasing Animal Unit Months and/or changing the season-of-use to reduce the need for future burn treatments.

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In conclusion, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the scope of the Bald Mountain prescribed fire CE. We encourage continued attention to our concerns and we look forward to hearing about and being involved in future proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,



Jason Fearneyhough

Director

JF/jw

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
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Wyoming State Grazing Board
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