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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.*

March 12, 2019

Christopher Jones, IDT Lead  
United States Forest Service  
Bighorn National Forest  
2013 Eastside 2<sup>nd</sup> St  
Sheridan, WY 82801

Dear Mr. Jones,

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) comments regarding the United States Forest Service (USFS) proposed Tie Flume project (Project) on the Bighorn National Forest.

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 support the proposed Project, including the use of prescribed fire, and feel it could result in positive changes to forest habitat, timber resources, livestock forage availability, and other users that either rely on the forest for products or enjoyment. In our March 14, 2016 letter to Mrs. Deb Lozinski regarding the Bighorn National Forest proposal to thin small diameter trees, we provided a number of resources regarding vegetation management and would suggest the USFS review this letter use as applicable. A copy of the letter can be easily obtained at:

<http://agriculture.wy.gov/images/stories/pdf/natres/policy/3-14-16bhnf%20conifer%20thinning.pdf>

In reviewing the Purpose and Need, we identified areas that could create potential issues in the future. First and foremost, the desire to enhance recreational opportunities must be weighed against the impact this may have on livestock grazing permittees and the efficient operation of their allotments during the grazing season. We urge the USFS to work closely with any affected permittees to logically site any new facilities, including roads used for access, and ensure that increased recreation does not lead to decreased operability or conflicts for livestock producers.

We support using the theme of each MA as the basis for developing potential site-specific projects within them and suggest the USFS tailor projects and analyses accordingly and focus on outcomes by MA. Additionally, we would like to see analysis of additional Animal Unit Months (AUMs) that may be created by vegetation treatments and ask the USFS make these available, either long-term or short-term, to producers. We do not support a mandatory "2 year rest" or "deferral" from livestock grazing following treatments.

Lastly, we are aware there is an increasing amount of invasive annual grasses on or near the forest and would like to see a plan developed regarding Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR) to any issues that may arise following treatments. We highly suggest the USFS coordinate with the Wyoming Weed and Pest and the local districts regarding

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invasive species. Expertise is also available from the University of Wyoming Extension in Sheridan and local conservation districts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working closely with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto

Director

DM/jb

- CC: Governor's Policy Office  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Wyoming Board of Agriculture  
Wyoming State Grazing Board  
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
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