



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.*

June 9, 2014

Mr. Tom Whitford, District Ranger  
United States Forest Service  
Douglas Ranger District  
2250 E. Richards St.  
Douglas, WY 82633

Dear Mr. Whitford:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) scoping comments pertaining to the United States Forest Service Douglas Ranger District (FS) proposed Bates Creek Aspen Restoration Project and associated Environmental Assessment on the Medicine Bow 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 to promote healthier and more vigorous aspen stands. The treatments will increase forage for wildlife and livestock and lessen the risk of catastrophic fire in the area. Aspen stands, and the associated understory components, provide valuable forage not only for wildlife but for livestock as well. While we do support treatment of these areas, we do not support large periods of rest, deferment or exclusion of livestock grazing (i.e., mandatory two year rest post-fire). Any rest, deferment or exclusion of livestock from treatment sites should be based upon the resources, site-specific monitoring and the most current science. Flexibility should be a driving factor in this process and livestock operators should be able to utilize these areas once vegetation conditions have shown a favorable response to treatments. We strongly encourage the FS to work with any affected livestock grazing permittees early and often in the process.

In conclusion, we support the proposed treatments. We thank you for the opportunity to comment and look forward to reviewing the future EA.

Sincerely,

Jason Fearnelyhough  
Director

JF/jb

CC: Governor's Policy Office  
Wyoming Board of Agriculture  
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts  
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Wyoming State Grazing Board  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
Wyoming Wool Growers

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