



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

September 17, 2018

Rob Davidson
President
Council for Bighorn Range
P.O. Box 464
Buffalo, WY 82834

Dear Mr. Rob Davidson,

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) is writing in response to your letter regarding the Rangeland Health Assessment Program (RHAP) project proposed by the University of Wyoming in cooperation with the Bighorn National Forest-Tongue Ranger District, Sheridan County Conservation District, Wyoming Stock Growers Association and 10 grazing permittees. We reviewed your questions and requests and have attached the following: project proposal, written statements of support by permittees and the Bighorn National Forest, and project clarification document requested by the Wyoming Board of Agriculture (Board).

The WDA and the Board, provide willing partners the ability to work together and cooperatively collect valuable rangeland data under the RHAP program. RHAP has proven over the years to help build relationships and trust amongst the permittees and land management agencies. It has successfully helped Wyoming livestock producers maintain and/or improve the economic viability of their livestock grazing operations, while providing meaningful data for land management agencies to maintain or adjust land management practices. RHAP data will help the land management agencies and producers make land management decision or support existing management. Under the RHAP program the Board selects the projects for funding, while the WDA manages the program funded by the Legislature.

The project proposed by the University of Wyoming meets the purpose of the RHAP program to assure the development and use of credible data in the assessment of Wyoming Rangelands to foster and assist in collaborative efforts to monitor rangelands with landowners, permittees and federal land agencies. In addition, the proposed project would provide valuable information to sustain viable levels of federal land grazing by providing credible data, and assessments of trends in the health of all rangelands. Finally, the proposed project would provide the use of credible data in potentially making adjustments in the management of these forest lands.

Amy Ormseth (District Ranger - Tongue Ranger District) provided a written statement in support of the proposed project, "I would begin by saying from the perspective of the Tongue Ranger District that we believe the funding from RHAP grant would benefit the forest in the following ways: 1) we believe this

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monitoring project could help build trust between the permittees and the Forest and 2) we believe the proposal could provide additional understanding of the ecological processes at work and could be considered with existing information to inform future decision making." The WDA supports the Board's decision that the proposed project would provide valuable supplemental data to existing monitoring efforts occurring on the Forest and that both the producers and Bighorn National Forest could benefit from the cooperatively collected information.

If you have additional questions about the process please let us know. If you have specific questions about the project or participation on the project, we would recommend you contact the University of Wyoming project lead or the many partners who have agreed to participate on the project.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto
Director

DM/cw

CC: Wyoming Board of Agriculture
University of Wyoming
Wyoming Stock Growers
Bighorn National Forest – Tongue Ranger District
Sheridan County Conservation District