



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

March 30, 2012

Mr. Steve Kozel, District Ranger
Bearlodge Ranger District
Black Hills National Forest
P.O. Box 680
Sundance, WY 82729

Dear Mr. Kozel:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Request for Comments for the Buttes Forest Management Project in the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposed project affects our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, it's important we be kept informed of proposed actions and decisions and that we continue to be provided the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

This project will temporarily impact grazing permittees, agriculture producers, landowners, and other citizens, as well as our natural resources, both in and near the project area. For these reasons, we are making the following comments.

We support efforts to reduce mountain pine beetle infestation as well as restore the vegetative and age-class diversity of forest ecosystems in Wyoming. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments will reduce the risk of further mountain pine beetle infestations and maintain current habitat and uses on the BHNF. In addition, treatments will open up the canopy to allow herbaceous vegetative growth and improve livestock grazing in the area.

Following are some specific individual effects upon livestock grazing that should be analyzed: introduction and spread of noxious weeds, impacts of modified roads, and other detrimental social and economic impacts upon livestock operators and livestock management operations.

We strongly encourage BHNF officials to continue to work with all livestock grazing permittees and private landowners who may potentially be affected by this project. We request the duration of time needed before grazing can occur on treated areas be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with the grazing permittees, rather than adhering to a predetermined nationwide policy. Managed livestock grazing is encouraged at the first feasible opportunity.

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

Sincerely,



Jason Fearneyhough

Director

JF/jc

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
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