



Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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April 26, 2005

US Army Corps of Engineers
Wyoming Regulatory Office
2232 Dell Range Blvd., Suite 210
Cheyenne, WY 82009

Dear US Army Corps of Engineers:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the request for authorization to construct Deep Gulch Reservoir by the Little Snake River Conservation District (LSRCD).

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: to be dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and welfare of our citizens. We believe it's important we are kept informed of proposed actions and decisions, and continue to be provided the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

We strongly support the efforts of the LSRCD in their application to construct Deep Gulch Reservoir. It is commendable for the district to have the vision and to take the initiative to create such a large reservoir in a watershed that has a number of ephemeral streams. The streams' inability to have steady, year-round flows signifies their lack of a significant contribution as tributaries to the Little Snake River and the aquatic life which live there.

Aquatic life and wildlife will greatly benefit from the creation of this reservoir. Migrating waterfowl can now seek shelter in this area. Many reservoirs, similar to this one proposed, are stocked by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and have become very popular for trout fisherman. Additional wildlife including elk, deer, and antelope will benefit from the reservoir by having an additional site for water, as well as significantly better grazing opportunities.

Livestock grazing can be used as a resource management tool to manipulate the range resource toward a desired condition. Livestock grazing, in addition to providing forage for livestock, can be used to change the seral stage of the plant community, remove decadent plant growth to rejuvenate forage species, reduce fine fuels, or improve the quality of forage for wildlife.

Water is a critical resource when grazing livestock. This reservoir will not only be an additional source of water, but it will also help alleviate over-grazing of a single location within the radius of a water source by livestock and wildlife. The use of only one water source eliminates livestock from fully utilizing all vegetation found throughout the pastures. The Deep Gulch

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

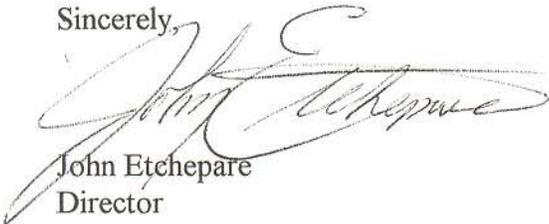
Reservoir will allow livestock to better utilize the pasture, increase weight gains, and ultimately increase the profit margins of the livestock producer who grazes his animals near the reservoir.

The WDA would like to make recommendations to the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and the LSRC. We suggest a fence be built around the reservoir with 2 – 3 water gaps for livestock and wildlife to enter for drinking. We also would like to recommend occasional grazing within the fenced area to reduce weed infestations and maintain a viable wetland plant community. Additionally, willow and other aquatic plants should be transplanted to make this habitat more diverse.

The development of the Deep Gulch Reservoir will be a positive improvement to the Little Snake River watershed. The life expectancy for this reservoir should be well beyond our lifetimes, and future generations will benefit. We compliment the LSRC on their foresight and strongly recommend the permit be issued.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



John Etchepare
Director

JE/jw

Cc: Governor's Planning Office
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Little Snake River Conservation District