

# Wyoming Department of Agriculture

2219 Carey Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002 ■ Phone: 307-777-7321 ■ Fax: 307-777-6593 ■ Website: wyagric.state.wy.us ■ Email: wda1@state.wy.us

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



Dave Freudenthal, *Governor*  
John Etchepare, *Director*

December 22, 2008

Tracy Hollingshead, District Ranger  
Kemmerer Ranger District  
Bridger-Teton National Forest  
308 Highway 189 North  
Kemmerer, WY 83101

Dear Ms. Tracy Hollingshead:

Following are the comments of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the proposed East Fork – Pole Creek Vegetation Treatment Project for the Kemmerer Ranger District of the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Our comments are specific to our mission: to be dedicated 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 continue to be provide the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA understands the need to salvage the dead and dying beetle bark killed trees to reduce hazardous fuel loads. We support the reduction in these fuel loads as well as restoring the vegetative age-class diversity of a fire-adapted ecosystem to forest systems in Wyoming. Thinning forest stands, sagebrush and shrubs will open the canopy and allow herbaceous vegetation growth to expand, allowing livestock grazing to continue and improve on the allotment. The proposed management actions will benefit the ecosystem, wildlife habitat and increase animal unit months.

The WDA urges the Kemmerer Ranger District analyze the following effects upon livestock grazing in the environmental document: introduction and spread of noxious weeds, mitigation and reclamation of disturbed areas, impacts upon livestock grazing by both the tree salvage and prescribed burning operations, impacts to new and modified roads, increased number of vehicles in the area causing harm to livestock and livestock operations, opened gates, and other detrimental social and economic impacts upon livestock operators and livestock management operations.

We request the Kemmerer Ranger District evaluate the duration of time needed before grazing can occur on prescribed burn areas be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with grazing permittees. Short duration livestock grazing in burned and thinned areas is a tool known to help revitalize re-emergent vegetation. We encourage the use of managed livestock grazing in the treated areas at the first feasible opportunity. In addition, we request timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are critical to the re-introduction of livestock on treated areas.

---

#### BOARD MEMBERS

Juan Reyes, *District 1* ■ Jack Corson, *District 2* ■ Jim Mickelson, *District 3* ■ Jim Bennage, *District 4* ■ Joe Thomas, *District 5* ■ David J. Graham, *District 6* ■ Gene Hardy, *District 7*  
Patrick Zimmerer, *Southeast* ■ Dalin Winters, *Northwest* ■ Vacant, *Southwest* ■ Vacant, *Northeast*

East Fork – Pole Creek Vegetation Treatment Project  
Bridger-Teton National Forest  
Kemmerer Ranger District  
12/22/2008  
Page 2

We encourage Bridger-Teton National Forest officials continue working with all livestock grazing permittees who may experience adverse affects created by this project. Grazing on public lands is of significant value to agricultural producers as well as local communities. The impacts created by the proposed project could initially decrease revenues for grazing permittees and other agricultural producers. We ask the Kemmerer Ranger District to consider these additional concerns considered in the analysis for the environmental document. In addition, decisions in the proposed project should allow Forest Service officials, grazing permittees and private landowners the opportunity to work cooperatively. We encourage flexibility in making the best site specific, case-by-case decisions that are in the best interest of the affected resources throughout the life of the proposed project.

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

Sincerely,



for John Etchepare  
Director

JE/cw

CC: Governor's Planning Office  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Wyoming Board of Agriculture