

# Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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Dave Freudenthal, Governor  
John Etchepare, Director

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

Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services

March 11, 2009

Easements Programs Division  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Farm and Ranch Lands Program  
PO Box 2890, RM. 6819-S  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Natural Resources Conservation Service:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the proposed interim rules on the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP): Docket Number NRCS-IFR-08006.

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposal has major impacts upon our agriculture industry, our natural resources and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it is important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA supports the conservation, protection and restoration of America's farm and ranchlands. We believe the benefits to these programs are multifaceted for the private landowner, the wildlife utilizing these private lands and the public for their water quality, aesthetic values and open space. We write the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in support of the Summary of 2008 Act Changes for the FRPP.

NRCS plans to retain easements on the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), which we do not support. We strongly urge the WRP follow the same guideline as the proposed FRPP. We strongly support NRCS authorizing eligible conservation easement entities to hold the easement deeds and monitor the restrictions set forth in the contract. We believe landowners interested in setting land aside for conservation in an easement would prefer to work with local or in-state entities that specialize in establishing easements for fair market value. The easement entities can work with neighboring landowners to create large, landscape scale easements, which is more beneficial to all.

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The WDA thanks the NRCS for receiving our comments. We look forward to reviewing the final rules and to the implementation of these programs onto the farm and ranchlands across Wyoming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Etchepare" followed by the date "3/11/09". The signature is written in a cursive style.

John Etchepare  
Director

JE/jw

Cc: Governor's Planning Office  
WDA Board of Agriculture  
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  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Wyoming NRCS State Office