



Matthew H. Mead, *Governor*
Jason Fearneyhough, *Director*
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The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

April 4, 2011

Robert M. Sprentall, District Ranger
Douglas Ranger District
Medicine Bow National Forest
And Thunder Basin National Grassland
2250 East Richards Street
Douglas, WY 82633

Dear Mr. Sprentall:

Following are the comments of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the proposal to treat hazardous fuel loads for select stands within the Laramie Peak Unit of the Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF).

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 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 MBNF's efforts to reduce hazardous fuel loads as well as improve and maintain forest health in Wyoming. Thinning forest stands and shrubs will open the canopy and increase herbaceous vegetation benefiting the ecosystem; wildlife habitat and increase available forage for livestock grazing.

The WDA urges the MBNF to 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 the various treatments, impacts of new and modified roads, increased number of vehicles in the area causing harm to livestock and livestock operations, gates left open, and other detrimental social and economic impacts upon livestock operators.

We request the MBNF evaluate the duration of time needed before grazing can occur on treated areas on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with grazing permittees. Short duration livestock grazing in treated areas can 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.

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East Laramie Range – Hazardous Fuel Load Treatment Project
Medicine Bow National Forest
Douglas Ranger District
04/04/11
Page 2

We encourage MBNF 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 MBNF consider these additional concerns 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 Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/cw

CC: Governor's Planning Office
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Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
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