

# Wyoming Department of Agriculture

2219 Carey Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002 • Phone 307-777-7321 • Fax 307-777-6593 • Website: wyagric.state.wy.us • E-mail: 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*



Wyoming Department of Agriculture

April 13, 2009

Mr. Steve Kozel  
Bearlodge Ranger District  
PO 680  
Sundance, WY 82729

Dear Mr. Kozel:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Scoping Notice for the proposed North End Wildlife Habitat Enhancement and Fuels Reduction Project analysis in the Black Hills National Forest, Bearlodge Ranger District.

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 this 1488-acre project area. For these reasons, we are making the following comments.

We support efforts to reduce fuel loads as well as restore the vegetative and age-class diversity of fire-adapted ecosystems to forests in Wyoming. Thinning forest understory and applying fuel treatments will open up the canopy to allow herbaceous vegetative growth and thus, allow livestock grazing to continue and improve in the area. These management actions will increase animal unit months and in turn supplement local economies.

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 Black Hills National Forest 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. Additionally, timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are critical to the re-introduction of livestock on treated areas and must be required.

#### BOARD MEMBERS

Juan Reyes, District 1 • Vacant, District 2 • Shaun Sims, District 3 • Jim Bennage, District 4 • Joe Thomas, District 5 • Bryan Brost, District 6 • Jim Price, Jr., District 7

#### YOUTH BOARD MEMBERS

Patrick Zimmerer, Southeast • Dalin Winters, Northwest • John Hansen, Southwest • Bridget Kukowski, Northeast

Decisions in the proposed plan should allow Forest Service officials, grazing permittees and private landowners the opportunity to work cooperatively. Flexibility to make the best site-specific, case-by-case decisions that are in the best interests of the affected resources and citizens throughout the life of this project should also be addressed.

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

Sincerely,



John Etchepare  
Director

JE/jc

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