

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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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.



Dave Freudenthal, Governor
John Etchepare, Director

June 23, 2009

Don Newton
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
510 Meadowview Dr.
Lander, WY 82520

Dear Mr. Newton:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study for sediment impairment on Ocean Lake submitted by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedication 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.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the TMDL for Ocean Lake. The process is new for everyone including DEQ and WDA. We write in support of DEQ's mission; utilize the TMDL process to improve Wyoming's waters. We assume the studies DEQ relies on in the TMDL are accurate and neutral.

Our foremost concern regarding the TMDL is found on page 1 of the Executive Summary: *"Although the nine irrigation drains are currently a minor contributor to the sediment impairment in Ocean Lake, it has been estimated that approximately 56% of the historical sediment contributions from the irrigation drains have been reduced through implementation of BMP's in the 1980s and 1990s. Prior to these proactive efforts, sediment contributions from these drains were estimated at 5,519 tons/yr. The current estimated sediment contribution to Ocean Lake from the drains is 2,428 tons/yr, reflecting the progress that has been made in reducing sediment contributions to Ocean Lake."*

We are concerned the TMDL is written with a continued negative and heavy emphasis on how agricultural operations including livestock trampling of stream banks and irrigation ditches depositing large amounts of sediment into Ocean Lake. DEQ indicated irrigation drains contribute only 2% of annual allocations. DEQ indicates the majority of Ocean Lake sediment impairment is the "resuspension of lake bottom sediment by wind induced waves." This is concerning to us. We fail to see how the TMDL will ever reduce wind or waves and the resuspension of sediment. The experimental efforts to sink Christmas trees to catch sediment and create fish habitat seems positive, but the ultimate issue remains; years of sediment build-up, removal of existing sediment and ultimately creating spawning habitat for a self sustaining walleye population. We strongly urge the time, money and energy DEQ spends on the Ocean

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Lake TMDL reflect efforts in the appropriate areas and not on the minor 2% irrigation contribution.

We genuinely support the efforts of DEQ on Ocean Lake and improving the water quality and water body for the intended purposes, irrigation and fisheries. Many citizens benefit from you efforts, including agriculture producers. We ask DEQ to continue including WDA in all water related efforts, including future TMDL studies. Thank you for receiving and implementing our comments.

Sincerely,



Jason Fearneyhough
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 Game and Fish Department