

# 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

July 18, 2008

Mr. Mike Taylor, DOE NEPA Compliance Officer  
DOE RMOTC/NPR-3  
U. S. Department of Energy  
907 N. Poplar Street, Suite 150  
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Following are our comments pertaining to the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed action of connecting the Rocky Mountain Oilfield Testing Center (RMOTC) and Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 3 (NPR-3) to the Salt Creek Joint Powers Board (SCJPB) potable water pipeline in order to provide a safe and reliable water distribution system.

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 that we be kept informed of proposed actions and decisions and that we continue to be provided the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

We would like to express our thanks for notifying our office of the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and providing us opportunity to comment on the effect of this project on agriculture. We appreciate your cooperation in this effort.

Alternative A (the preferred alternative) is the most sensible alternative. In this alternative, a large portion of the pipeline construction occurs on NPR-3 land and occurs along existing road right-of-ways. Using existing road right-of-ways will decrease the amount of surface disturbance, thus reducing impacts to vegetation. The short term construction planned will also decrease impacts to livestock grazing in the area.

We appreciate your commitment to reclamation of the project area following construction completion. Successful and timely reclamation, mitigation, and weed control are imperative in disturbed areas. This plan should fix standards for reclamation that are measureable, quantifiable, time-sensitive, and verifiable through monitoring. It is crucial that food and habitat for livestock and wildlife become available as soon as possible following pipeline construction.

#### BOARD MEMBERS

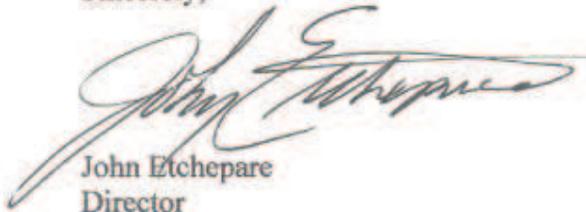
Juan Reyes, District 1 ■ Jack Carson, District 2 ■ Jim Mickelson, District 3 ■ Jim Bennage, District 4 ■ Joe Thomas, District 5 ■ David J. Graham, District 6 ■ Gene Hardy, District 7  
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We strongly encourage your staff to continue to work closely and consistently with all affected agriculture producers to learn of their concerns and recommendations regarding this project. Agriculture producers are intimately familiar with areas affected by this proposal and they possess irreplaceable long-term, on-the-ground knowledge. They are particularly aware of the individual and cumulative impacts upon wildlife habitat and livestock forage, as well as rangeland health for the planning area.

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture would like to be notified if the preferred alternative (Alternative A) is not chosen. In this situation, Bureau of Land Management lands may be crossed affecting grazing permittees and new roads may need to be built, increasing surface disturbance and forage for livestock and wildlife.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Etchepare", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

John Etchepare  
Director

JE/jc

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