Wyoming
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture

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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.

December 14, 2009

Mr. Marty Sharp, NEPA Coordinator
Shoshone National Forest
203A Yellowstone Avenue
Cody, WY 82414

Dear Mr. Sharp:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Sunlight Vegetation and Fuels Management Project Environmental Assessment (EA) scoping notice on the Clark Fork Ranger District of the Shoshone National Forest (SNF).

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 action 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 continue to provide the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

This project will impact grazing permittees, agriculture producers, landowners, and other citizens, as well as our natural resources, both in and near the 6,323-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. Timber harvest and applying fuel treatments will open up the canopy to allow herbaceous vegetative growth and thus, allow livestock grazing to continue and improve. These management actions will increase AUMs 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, unsuccessful reclamation of disturbed areas, impacts upon livestock grazing by prescribed burning, impacts of new and modified roads, increased number of vehicles in the area causing death or impairments of livestock, opened gates, and other detrimental social and economic impacts upon livestock operators and livestock management operations.

The WDA strongly encourages SNF officials to continue to work with all livestock grazing permittees and private landowners who may potentially be affected by this project. We

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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, including deferred grazing, is encouraged at the first feasible opportunity.

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,

Jason Fearneyhough

Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/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