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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 21, 2012

Mr. Dave Hogen, District Ranger
Medicine Wheel/Paintrock Ranger District, Bighorn National Forest
604 E. Main
Lovell, WY 82431

Dear Mr. Hogen:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's comments pertaining to the Crater Ridge Vegetation Management Project on the Medicine Wheel/Paintrock Ranger District of the Bighorn National Forest (BNF).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As the 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 us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

We support the proposed project and ask the BNF to consider our comments when issuing a decision. Specifically, this project will temporarily impact grazing permittees, agriculture producers and landowners both in and near the project area. We request the BNF evaluate the duration of time needed before grazing can occur on treated areas and determine possible fencing of areas for tree regeneration on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with grazing permittees. Thinning dense forest stands will open up the canopy to allow herbaceous vegetative growth and thus, allow livestock grazing to continue and improve on the allotment. Managed livestock grazing is encouraged at the first feasible opportunity.

Following are some specific individual effects upon livestock grazing that the BNF should analyze: introduction and spread of noxious weeds, unsuccessful reclamation of disturbed areas, impacts of new and modified roads, gates left open, increased number of vehicles in the area causing death or impairments of livestock, impacts on range improvements and other detrimental social and economic impacts upon livestock operators and livestock management operations.

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

Sincerely,

Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/jc

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association

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