



The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

September 13, 2012

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Field Manager
ATTN: Carter Lease
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Kemmerer, WY 83101-9711

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kemmerer Field Office (KFO), Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Carter Lease grazing allotment (Carter Lease).

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this EA 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.

The WDA appreciates the KFO's efforts to collaboratively work with Carter Lease permittees on the applications to convert the two requested permits. We believe in and support incorporating new management methods to meet the needs of both the permittees and the natural resources. The KFO's Proposed Action has considered the multiple uses, while still retaining current permitted livestock use. Our comments are contingent upon permittees' support for the Proposed Action. We offer the following comments for KFO to consider prior to issuing a final decision assuming permittee support.

- The one permit conversion requested by DJR L & L from winter sheep to summer cattle utilizing temporary steel stock tanks on private lands, is intended to utilize upland vegetation with no increased use of riparian areas by the additional cattle Animal Unit Months. How will KFO address non DJR L & L cattle use of stock water and upland vegetation? We are concerned the overlap of cattle could cause over utilization prior to move dates set forth in the Terms and Conditions. The same is true of DJR L & L cattle finding their way to riparian areas utilized by other permittees. We recommend KFO provide flexibility as the change of use and new management is implemented.
- The KFO is requiring before and after pictures of stock tank placement on private ground. The KFO is also utilizing data collected by a third party on private ground. The WDA supports permittee involvement of cooperative monitoring and data collection of range conditions. However, we recommend the KFO and the permittee establish transects and collect data on public lands, rather than on private land for the purposes of making public land decisions.
- KFO states in their Decision Record, DJR L & L will have a dual purpose permit (winter sheep or summer cattle), but the permittee must be "constant for a minimum of three years before another conversion is made." KFO mentioned on the phone, the permittee must keep the approved conversion

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permit in summer cattle for three years, before deciding if they would like to go back to winter sheep. However, this statement is inconsistent with the EA, which is referring to waiting three years before DJR L & L formally requests for additional conversions of the three remaining winter sheep permits. WDA requests clarification from KFO of how long the one approved converted permit must be grazed by cattle if DJR L & L wishes to go back to winter sheep. The EA lacks the same details and consistency with the Decision Record.

- The WDA urges KFO to clarify the “apparent signs of resource damage or decline” by distinguishing this from the previous paragraph requesting photo points where stock tanks are placed. As currently written, on page 12 of the EA, point 6., the observation of the resource and possible removal of cattle is based on the damage at or near the stock tanks. Additionally, we request developing a timeline to determine a trend in resource declines using existing WWR, LP transects as mentioned.
- Page 13 indicates the “sheep camps and salt and/or mineral supplement sites will be at least ¼ mile away from water troughs, riparian areas...” If water troughs are placed on private ground, we do not support KFO dictating where sheep camps or minerals are located. We request KFO review, revise and/or remove any statements where BLM has no legal authority on private lands.
- Page 16: The BLM has restrictions in sage-grouse areas with “undetermined” leks. WDA strongly requests KFO remove any restrictions in the EA and Decision Record where “undetermined” lek is written. We do not support restricting management based on something unknown, such as a lek.

Again, we appreciate KFO’s approach to the Carter Lease EA by allowing adaptive management techniques to meet the needs of the two permittees requesting conversions. While we support the Proposed Action, we ask the KFO address the aforementioned concerns prior to issuing a final decision. If we can provide any additional assistance, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/jw

Cc: Governor’s Policy Office
WDA Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
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