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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.

July 10, 2010

Misty A. Hayes
Acting District Ranger
Douglas Ranger District
United States Forest Service
2250 East Richards Street
Douglas, WY 82633-8922

Dear Misty A. Hays:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Scoping Notice regarding the Ballard Petroleum Holdings LLC (Ballard) project proposal of the construction of two conventional oil wells located on National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Spring Creek Unit of the Thunder Basin National Grassland.

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 project 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 understand the Ballard project will develop two oil wells involving approximately 4 acres of surface disturbance for the well pads, along with 0.6 mile of new road. The Forest Management Plan identifies the project area having a management emphasis for livestock grazing, which will impact permittees in the proposed project area.

Following are some specific individual impacts upon livestock grazing needing analyzed:

- Increased on-and off-road traffic
- Construction of new roads
- Increased number of vehicles in the area causing death or impairments of livestock
- Cut fences
- Gates left open
- Damaged range improvements
- Decreased palatability of vegetation and forage from road dust and development activities, unsuccessful reclamation of disturbed areas
- Introduction and spread of noxious weeds

The impacts of this project may increase costs and decrease revenues for grazing permittees. The accumulated impacts of this and nearby projects could jeopardize the continued existence of grazing

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operations in this area. The NFS needs to identify and evaluate impacts and proposed remedies in the analysis.

The WDA strongly recommends NFS staff not allow the development of an improved road until the wells are determined to be viable, oil producing wells. Since these wells are exploratory wells, we believe developing an improved road with crown and ditch is not necessary and will negatively impact vegetation and soil viability for future. In addition, Ballard and NFS should cooperatively produce a comprehensive reclamation and weed management plan. Timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are vital and should be required. Reclamation and mitigation requirements and the consequences of Ballard failing to accomplish this reclamation and mitigation should be clearly stated.

We strongly encourage NFS staff and Ballard work closely and consistently with all affected grazing permittees and agriculture producers to learn of their concerns and recommendations regarding the proposed project. It is imperative NFS officials continuously inform all livestock grazing permittees who are directly or indirectly affected by the proposed project of the issues, decisions, and resulting actions regarding this proposal.

We encourage flexibility to make the best site-specific, case-by-case decisions that are in the best interests of the affected resources and citizens throughout the life of this plan.

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

Sincerely,



for Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/cw/ra

CC: Governor's Planning Office
WDA Board of Agriculture
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Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
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