



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.

October 6, 2009

Mr. Jon Warder
Bighorn National Forest
2013 Eastside 2nd Street
Sheridan, WY 82801

Dear Mr. Warder:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments supporting the Forest-wide Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Hazardous Fuels Reduction scoping on 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 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 temporarily impact grazing permittees, agriculture producers, landowners, and other citizens, as well as our natural resources, both in and near the 2,100 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. Thinning conifers and applying fuel treatments will open up the canopy to allow herbaceous vegetative growth and thus, allow livestock grazing to continue and improve.

Following are some specific individual effects upon livestock grazing that should be analyzed: introduction and spread of noxious weeds, impacts of modified roads, cut fences and open gates.

We strongly encourage BNF officials to continue to work with all livestock grazing permittees and private landowners who may potentially be affected by this project. We 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 is encouraged at the first feasible opportunity.

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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

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