

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

2219 Carey Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002 n Phone: 307-777-7321 n Fax: 307-777-6893 n Website: wyagric.state.wy.us n Email: wda1@state.wy.us

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



Dave Preudenthal, Governor
Jason Fearneyhough, Director

May 26, 2009

John R. Christensen, Field Manager
Kemmerer Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
312 Highway 189 North
Kemmerer, WY 83101

Dear Mr. Christensen:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the re-analyzing of Carter Lease Grazing Allotment for their 10-year permit renewal located within the Kemmerer Field Office (FO) of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

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.

The proposed action intends to analyze the Carter Lease Grazing Allotment and 10-year grazing permit with no new restriction, along with analyzing the closing of the allotment to livestock grazing. Changes to the allotment will significantly impact grazing permittees, agriculture producers, landowners, and other citizens, as well as our natural resources, in and near the project area.

The WDA does not support analyzing the closing of federal lands within the allotment to livestock grazing. The current Resource Management Plan (RMP) dated June, 1986, along with the revised RMP (August, 2008 – Record of Decision (ROD) pending), have already dismissed this alternative from further study. The reason for not analyzing the "No Livestock Grazing Alternative" was provided in the current RMP - Rangeland Program Summary of the ROD:

" An alternative of "No Livestock Grazing on Public Lands" was considered during the planning process. It was eliminated from detailed study because it was felt to be unreasonable. To prohibit all livestock grazing, the public lands would have to be fenced. This would not be practical or feasible, particularly where public lands are heavily interspersed with private lands. It would also not be feasible to require ranchers to control their livestock to keep them off unfenced public land. The costs would be too great for the ranchers and the Bureau. All lands would have to be marked and an intensive monitoring and enforcement program would have to be implemented."¹

¹ Record of Decision for the Kemmerer Resource Management Plan and Rangeland Program Summary Document. June, 1986. Bureau of Land Management. Page 2.

BOARD MEMBERS

Juan Reyes, District 1 ● Jim Hodder, District 2 ● Shaun Sims, District 3 ● Jim Bennage, District 4 ● Joe Thomas, District 5
● Bryan Brost, District 6 ● Jim Price, Jr., District 7

YOUTH BOARD MEMBERS

Patrick Zimmerer, Southeast ● Dalin Winters, Northwest ● John Hansen, Southwest ● Bridget Kukowski, Northeast

In addition, the revised RMP under Section 2.3 Alternatives Considered, but Not Carried Forward for Detailed Analysis states in consideration of prohibiting or excluding livestock grazing in the planning areas:

“FLPMA requires the BLM to manage public lands and resources according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Alternatives inconsistent with BLM’s multiple use mandate were not carried forward.”²

It is clear under the current RMP and the revised RMP that Livestock grazing is an approved activity and the “No Grazing Alternative” should not be re-analyzed under this planning effort. Management prescriptions in the analysis must reflect multiple use resource principles. Congressional mandates, federal statutes, and implementing regulations call for multiple uses on BLM administered lands. WDA particularly believes the Congressional policy expressed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) about livestock grazing, needs to be specifically noted in the environmental document. FLPMA Sec. 102(8) states “The Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States that...the public lands be managed in a manner...that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals...” Many in the public are unaware of this Congressional policy and do not understand how critical the utilization of these lands are to livestock grazing, permittees, local communities, the continued health of the resource, and the State of Wyoming.

Grazing on public lands represents a vital economic value to agricultural producers and to local communities. If the Kemmerer FO insists on analyzing the “No Grazing Alternative”, then we insist the Kemmerer FO provides an in-depth analysis of the adverse socio-economic impacts this alternative would create to the permittees, local community and the State. We urge Kemmerer FO officials coordinate with the Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics located in the University Of Wyoming - College Of Agriculture, who conducted several studies showing how federal policies impact agriculture throughout the state. The studies include the importance of Animal Unit Months (AUMs), the significance of input and output of state agriculture, and the costs and revenues to counties of agriculture compared to development. The proposed action may directly affect the continuation of livestock grazing and other agricultural operations within the planning area and the economic impacts upon agriculture need to be included in the analysis.

In addition to the economic impacts, livestock grazing represents irreplaceable environmental and social values. Sheep and cattle have grazed the landscape for over 100 years. These values and traditions contribute valuable and irreplaceable wildlife habitat, open spaces, ranchland buffers between federal lands and developments, scenic vistas, visual beauty, and the traditional image and heritage of the historic rural landscapes of Wyoming and the West. Losses of these

² Proposed Resource management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kemmerer Field Office Planning Area. August, 2008. Bureau of Land Management.

essential environmental, historic, and social values of livestock grazing should be included by the Kemmerer FO in the scope of the analysis.

Livestock grazing is an important resource management tool used to achieve desired environmental objectives in the planning area, including obtaining positive effects upon food and habitat for wildlife and livestock. The environmental document and analysis needs to include (1) the positive effects livestock grazing has upon the environment (Severson, 1990³; Urness, 1990⁴), and (2) how livestock grazing assists in achieving environmental objectives (Severson, 1990; Urness, 1990) and objectives set forth in the Kemmerer Resource Management Plan (RMP).

The WDA appreciates the efforts of the Kemmerer FO staff in working with interested permittees and strongly urge this practice continues with all permittees located within the allotment. We encourage Kemmerer FO officials to work with all grazing permittees and agriculture producers affected by this plan to learn of their concerns and recommendations. Producers possess irreplaceable long-term, on-the-ground knowledge that should be utilized to its full advantage. Producers are particularly aware of how impacts will affect rangeland health, wildlife habitat, and livestock forage. They understand it is in their best interest to continue to serve as stewards of rangelands in the project area and can offer recommendations which are both environmentally and economically sound. Thus, we strongly recommend Kemmerer FO officials aggressively address the concerns and recommendations of these stewards throughout the planning process. This includes ensuring grazing permittees who are directly affected by this plan receive all notices about this renewal.

In closing, we must remember that livestock grazing is an approved activity, the Kemmerer FO decisions made in the proposed action should be based on a case-by-case basis and supported with peer-reviewed science. The analysis needs to identify the science supporting the decisions and discussions and be based on long-term monitoring data and not based on single incidents, isolated situations, or political whims.

The WDA does not support the idea of evaluating the allotment as an “all or nothing” endeavor. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires that all reasonable alternatives be evaluated, however, we do not believe the no grazing alternative is a reasonable alternative since the current and revised Kemmerer RMP states that reductions, limitations or actions that

³ Severson, K.E. 1990. Summary: Livestock grazing as a wildlife management tool. p. 3-6 *In*: K.E. Severson. Can Livestock Be Used As a Tool to Enhance Wildlife Habitat. Gen. Tech Rep. RM-194. U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Experiment Station, Fort Collins, CO.

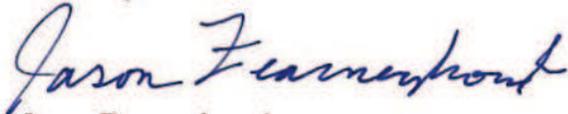
⁴ Urness, P.J. 1990 Livestock as manipulators of mule deer winter habitats in northern Utah. p. 25-35. 6 *In*: K.E. Severson, tech. coord. Can Livestock Be Used As a Tool to Enhance Wildlife Habitat. Gen. Tech Rep. RM-194. U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Experiment Station, Fort Collins, CO.

Kemmerer Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
Carter Lease Grazing Allotment & Permit Renewal
05/26/2009
Page 4

prohibit livestock grazing is considered an adverse impact. It is important the Kemmerer FO analyze potential identified issues in the analysis on a case-by-case basis while considering all the potential causal factors associated with a potential issue, rather than isolating or focusing on just livestock grazing.

We support the continuance of commercial livestock grazing on the Carter Lease Grazing Allotment. 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 future proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Fearneyhough". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/cw

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