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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.

March 2, 2011

Community Forest Program
U.S. Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, Cooperative Forestry
1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Code 1123
Washington, D. C. 20250

To Whom It May Concern:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Forest Service (FS) proposed rule and request for comments pertaining to the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP).

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 rule may affect 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.

The WDA believes this program is not the best use of already limited FS funds and would rather funds be used for projects aimed at improving existing FS land management and sustainability. There are also potential negative impacts to the agriculture industry if private lands are sold to non-profit organizations, tribal governments, or local governments for non-agricultural uses. An example of this may be the purchase of land that is considered base property for a livestock grazing permit and the subsequent removal of livestock grazing from associated FS lands. In addition, this program allows local governments, tribal governments and non-profit organizations an unfair advantage in purchasing lands in what should be a competitive process.

In conclusion, the WDA does not support this proposed rule and strongly urges the FS carefully consider how limited funds are best spent. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule and request an opportunity to comment on specifics of the rule before the final rule is released. We look forward to hearing about and being involved in future proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,

Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/jc

CC: Governor's Planning Office
Guardians of the Range
Rocky Mountain Farmer's Union
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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