



Wyoming
DEPARTMENT OF *Agriculture*

Dave Freudenthal, *Governor*
Jason Fearneyhough, *Director*
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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.

September 24, 2009

Ms. Ruth Esperance, District Ranger
Shoshone National Forest, Washakie Ranger District
333 E. Main St.
Lander, WY 82520

Dear Ms. Esperance:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the proposed action to reduce hazardous fuels, create defensible space, and place fuel breaks in the Freak Mountain, Sinks Canyon, and Homestead Park areas of the Shoshone National Forest (SNF), Washakie Ranger District.

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 each 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. These management actions will increase animal unit months and in turn supplement local economies.

Following are some specific individual effects upon livestock grazing that should be analyzed: introduction and spread of noxious weeds, impacts of modified roads, and other detrimental social and economic impacts upon livestock operators and livestock management operations.

We strongly encourage SNF 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

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nationwide policy. Managed livestock grazing is encouraged at the first feasible opportunity. Additionally, timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are critical to the re-introduction of livestock on treated areas and must be required.

Decisions in the proposed action should allow SNF officials, grazing permittees and private landowners the opportunity to work cooperatively. 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 project should also be addressed.

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,

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

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