



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

February 2, 2011

Ms. Becky Riegle
USDA Forest Service
5298 E. Clark Rd
Harrisville, MI 48740

Dear Ms. Riegle:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's scoping comments pertaining to the Loop Road Fuel Reduction Project on the Washakie Ranger District of the Shoshone National Forest (SNF).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As the 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 us 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 16,642-acre project area for ten to twenty years. 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 while allowing livestock grazing to continue and improve in treated areas. These actions will also reduce the likelihood of severe wildfires and improve human safety.

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

We strongly encourage SNF officials continue to work with all livestock grazing permittees and private landowners potentially affected by this project. We request the SNF evaluates the duration of time needed before grazing can occur on treated areas on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with the grazing permittees, rather than adhering to a predetermined nationwide policy. We also encourage the SNF to consider livestock herding in the analysis as a management option in treated areas. 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 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 Stock Growers Association
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