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.

Dave Freudenthal, *Governor*
John Etchepare, *Director*

November 7, 2008

Ms. Leslie TeWinkle
Senior Natural Resource Specialist
Natural Resource Group
1000IDS Center
82 South Eighth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Dear Ms. TeWinkle:

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) appreciates your effort to reach out to potential interested parties regarding the Sunstone Pipeline Project. Although this project is at an early stage of development, the WDA would like to share with you our thoughts on areas of potential impacts and areas needing analyzed in the environmental document.

It is important to understand that our comments pertaining to the Pre-Scoping Notice for the proposed Sunstone Pipeline Project (SPP) are specific to our mission: "to be dedicated 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 we be kept informed of proposed actions and decisions, and we continually be provided the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

We understand the SPP will consist of 600-miles of 42-inch diameter pipe beginning in Opal, Wyoming and ending in Oregon. The proposed activities in Wyoming consist of approximately 48-miles of the proposed pipeline and a compressor station located in Opal.

The SPP will undoubtedly create impacts to Wyoming's natural resources and livestock grazing operations. Following are some specific individual effects upon livestock grazing needing analyzed: direct disturbance to livestock and livestock operations due to construction activities, temporary and permanent loss of AUMs, increased off- and on-road traffic, construction of new roads, increased number of vehicles causing death or impairments of livestock, cut fences, opened gates, damaged range improvements, decreased palatability of vegetation and forage from road dust and construction activities, unsuccessful reclamation of disturbed areas, and the introduction and spread of noxious weeds and undesirable plants.

We strongly encourage FERC and Sunstone Pipeline, LLC (Sunstone) to work closely and communicate with all affected grazing permittees and agriculture producers to learn of their concerns and recommendations regarding this project. It is imperative FERC and

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Sunstone continuously informs all livestock graving permittees who are directly or indirectly affected by the issues, decisions, and actions of the proposed pipeline project. We support compensatory mitigation discussions with livestock permittees to lessen livestock stress and economic impacts imposed upon grazing permittees by the proposed pipeline project.

The impacts of this project may increase costs and decrease revenues for grazing permittees. The accumulated impacts of this and nearby projects could jeopardize the continued existence of grazing operations in the project area. The individual and cumulative impacts and the proposed remedies need to be thoroughly identified and evaluated in the analysis. The pipeline corridor crosses the state and a wide variety of ecosystems, in which reclamation criteria and chances for successful reclamation vary. Reclamation can not be treated the same across the state and should be adapted to the specific area of the state and type of ecosystem present. In addition, timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are needed and should be required throughout the entire corridor. It is imperative that reclamation and mitigation requirements and the consequences of failing to accomplish successful reclamation and mitigation be clearly stated in the EIS.

Many environmental impact studies are deficient in identifying or analyzing social and economic impacts imposed by proposed energy development projects. We strongly recommend that the EIS includes a full and thorough social and economic impact analysis. Since grazing on public lands represents a vital economic value to agriculture producers and local communities, we specifically suggest that that analysis includes the impacts upon livestock grazing in and adjacent to the planning area. The cumulative impacts of energy developments upon livestock grazing may jeopardize the livelihoods of grazing permittees. The loss or impaired ability of livestock grazing operations needs to be evaluated in the EIS.

In addition to its economic value, grazing also represents irreplaceable environmental and social values, contributing to the preservation of open spaces, the scenic vistas and visual beauty of the area, and the traditional image of the historic rural landscapes of Wyoming and the West. Any loss of these important environmental, historic, and social values of livestock grazing to users and visitors of the area and residents of impacted communities should be included in the scope of the study and the social impacts analyzed in the EIS.

Congressional mandates, federal statutes, and implementing regulations call for multiple use, and should be an integral part of the assessments. Moreover, the EIS should evaluate the impact of this project upon the intent expressed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to manage public lands in a manner that will provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic animals. The impacts upon food and habitat for fish and wildlife are usually well documented in NEPA documents. The consequences of the PBPP upon food and habitat for domestic animals deserve the same degree of study and documentation. Grazing is an essential tool to achieve desired environmental objectives in the planning area, including obtaining positive effects upon food and habitat

for both wildlife and livestock. The EIS needs to include 1) these positive effects of livestock grazing upon the environment and as a tool to achieve environmental objectives and 2) the impacts of this project on limiting the ability of livestock grazing to achieve these positive effects.

Peer reviewed science should underlie decisions that are made. The analysis needs to identify the science that supports the decisions and discussions regarding this project.

Decisions in the proposed plan should allow FERC officials, Sunstone, 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 resource and citizens throughout the life of this plan should also be addressed.

As far as the WDA's environmental review process, we would like to be provided the opportunity to participate as a cooperating agency on any NEPA document. This would entail the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Scoping Notice and development of alternatives; along with the review, analysis, and formal comments pertaining to the draft/final environmental document. It has been proven by incorporating the WDA and other state agencies in the environmental planning process, potential issues can be identified early in the process and resolution of these issues can be worked out.

In conclusion, as the planning effort continues to develop and more specific details of the project are identified, we would appreciate the opportunity to further comment on these specific details and the progress of the planning document. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Pre-Scoping Notice for the proposed project. We encourage continued attention to our concerns and we look forward to hearing about and being involved in future proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,

John Etchepare
Director

JE/cw

CC: Governor's Planning Office
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Board of Agriculture