



P.O. Box 1312
Lander, WY 82520

Wyoming Legislature
C/o Select Federal Natural Resources Management Committee
Legislative Services Office
213 State Capitol
Cheyenne, WY 82002

RE: Public Lands Management

Jan. 2, 2017

Dear Members of the Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee,

Thank you for your service and commitment to the state of Wyoming and your constituents. The Wyoming Wildlife Federation (WWF) appreciates the opportunities you have provided for public engagement concerning the Public Lands Constitutional Amendment (17LSO-0179).

We are writing to ask this committee not to introduce the constitutional amendment. Rather, we would like you to consider an alternative route, a replacement bill that aims to provide a stronger voice to counties with respect to land use planning, coordination and management of public lands, which federal law requires land managers to oblige through the NEPA process.

This committee has identified important concerns with federal agency management as the primary driver for 17LSO-0179. On behalf of the citizens of Wyoming, we ask that you please consider a different, more pragmatic solution to address these concerns. With your leadership on the transfer issue, this committee is well poised to design a solution-based piece of legislation that ensures the state has the explicit ability to take an active role in the planning and management of federal lands in Wyoming.

Early and consistent collaborative involvement of local governments in federal land management decisions can help alleviate the concerns about state and federal conflicts. An example of legislation that encompasses many of the aspects WWF is proposing is the 2015 Colorado House Bill 15-1225: *Concerning the provision of state assistance to local governments for the purpose of improved coordination in federal land management decision-making, and in connection therewith, making an appropriation*. We offer this as an example to this pragmatic approach to federal lands management. We would be happy to arrange a meeting with the sponsors of this Colorado bill to discuss the merits of such legislation for Wyoming. We can also provide you with other successful examples of state and federal collaborative efforts in other western states.

This legislative move alone will demonstrate that our state can be a leader in how public lands are cooperatively managed. Such a move will also provide a means for WWF and other groups to better engage in land management decisions for wildlife, habitat and access to these public lands that we so value.



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A different solutions-based bill offers this committee a proactive approach to addressing management conflicts, which is timely. This type of legislation will more than likely have the support of the public as well as the administration. Governor Mead created the Task Force on Forests – a diverse set of stakeholders – that resulted in specific recommendations to the state on federal lands management (2015). After two years of meetings, the Task Force’s No. 2 recommendation is to *facilitate the creation of a collaboration fund to financially and technically support place-based collaboration on forest issues*. This could be attributed to forest and BLM issues with the state taking a lead role.

A **collaboration fund** for counties to utilize to increase their capacity in federal land management processes and specifically for natural resource land use plans, would offer an innovative approach to the management conflicts this committee has concerns about.

The state’s lottery proceeds are a potential source for financially backing a collaboration fund. These dollars offer the mechanism for the state to be in a lead position for innovative planning and management (county-led, collaborative efforts). Lottery players would also appreciate knowing their contributions would help manage the health of our landscapes and resources.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with this committee and help draft a bill that suits your vision. Increasing local involvement in the management of our public lands is good for business and good for continuing to foster Wyoming’s important federal partnership. With this committee’s pragmatic approach, Wyoming can be a leader in legislative measures to better address how America’s public lands are managed.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposal, and for your dedication to this great state.

Sincerely,

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