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April 13, 2016

Chamois Andersen
P.O. Box 1312
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Medicine-Bow-Route National Forests
Laramie Ranger District
Attn: Frank Romero
2468 Jackson St.
Laramie, WY 82070

RE: Proposal for extended seasonal road closure and gate locations

Dear Mr. Romero,

We are writing to support the Forest Service's proposal to improve crucial big game habitat along the southeast boundary of the Snowy Range. We recognize that balancing management of species like elk with off-road recreation has become increasingly important as off-road recreational uses continue to increase on public lands in Wyoming. However, mitigating these effects, and specifically in the southeast portion of the Snowy Range where the habitat is crucial to the survival of the local herds that inhabit the area, we believe is highly appropriate as a management priority by the Forest Service.

Founded in 1937, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation has a current standing membership of approximately 5,000, and is the state's oldest and largest statewide conservation organization. Our mission is to work for hunters, anglers and other wildlife enthusiasts to conserve wildlife, protect and enhance habitat, perpetuate quality hunting and fishing, and protect citizen's right to use public lands and waters in Wyoming.

We appreciate the cooperation between the Forest Service and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) that led to this proposal. Cooperation coupled with sound science with such management decisions is paramount to the health of our big game resources.

We believe the proposal to extend the seasonal road closure in this area of high quality winter range is very important to the survival of mule deer in the Sheep Mountain/Laramie herds. ¹This proposal supports the WGFD's 2014-15 Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative and survey section results provided by the public. The majority, at 85 percent, agree that habitat quality on winter

¹ Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative Management Recommendations, 2015, v. 0513.

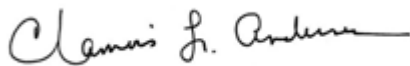
range is “very important” in determining the survival of mule deer in the Snowy Range/Laramie herd.

The effects of ATV use on: 1) soils, water quality and vegetation 2) wildlife (deer and elk), 3) the habitat and environment that wildlife depend upon has been proven. ²A 2008 study found that "activities of elk can be substantially affected by off-road recreation. ³Another study (2004) concluded that off-road vehicles have a substantial effect on elk behavior. Researchers noted that elk will move as far as 2,000 yards from ATV disturbance. The energy required to flee an area as a result of such disturbance puts the animals at a health risk by reducing the percentage of their body fat to below 9 percent, the report concluded. Lower body fat going into the winter months reduces the probability they will survive the winter. Those that do survive may suffer other risk when it comes to their offspring.

⁴A 2011 study shows that calf/cow ratios decrease when disturbance increases and therefore "maintaining disturbance-free areas for elk during parturitional periods" is necessary. We believe all the scientific research combined supports closing areas of crucial deer and elk habitat to human induced activities such as off-road vehicle use.

We strongly urge the Forest Service to adopt this proposal to extend the seasonal road closures along the southeast boundary of the Snowy Range, a sound resource management decision that will directly benefit the deer and elk herds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chamois L. Andersen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chamois L. Andersen
Executive Director

² Naylor, L.M., Wisdom, M.J., Anthony, R.G., 2008, Behavioral Responses of North American Elk to Recreational Activity. In: Journal of Wildlife Management, v. 73 (3).

³ Wisdom, M.J., Ager, A., Preisler, H.K., Norman, J., Johnson, B.K., 2004, Effects of off-road recreation on mule deer and elk. In: Transactions of the 69th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, p.p. 532-550.

⁴ Gregory, P.E., Alldredge, W.A. 2002. Reproductive Success of Elk Following Disturbance by Humans during Calving Season. In: The Journal of Wildlife Management, v. 64, n. 2, pp. 521-530