JIM GERINGER
GOVERNOR

State Of Wyoming

Office of Federal Land Policy

211

ART REESE
DIRECTOR

May 18, 2000

USDA-Forest Service CAET
Attn: UFP
Building 2, Suite 295
5500 Amelia Earhart Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of the State of Wyoming, this Office has reviewed the proposed Unified Federal Policy for Ensuring a Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management. We also provided the information to all affected State agencies for their review, in accordance with State Clearinghouse procedures. Enclosed you will find letters from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department which resulted from their reviews.

State agency comments are specific to their respective agency missions. While the State defers to their respective technical expertise in developing the State's position, the responsibility to ultimately articulate the official state policies and positions lies with the Governor or the Office of Federal Land Policy. Having said that, the Office of Federal Land Policy believes the unified approach has merit. Governor Geringer requires that the state of Wyoming speak in a unified voice on federal land issues. He has asked that the federal government also speak with one voice on those same issues. So far, it has refused. Having said that, it is gratifying to see a federal agency proposal that espouses a unified approach to management. We believe that collaborating across agency boundaries for the good of the resources makes eminent good sense and we would be a willing partner in such a venture.

We would like to be clear that any support of this proposal from the State of Wyoming is contingent upon acknowledgment by the federal government that the States have primacy in insuring water quality on a watershed level or otherwise. Watersheds transcend jurisdictional boundaries and the States and Tribes have been given a leadership role in identifying priority watersheds as well as in prescribing the methods and procedures for pursuing watershed improvement.

One criterion in designation of such watersheds is the value or condition of fish and wildlife and their habitats. Our Game and Fish Department has data and expertise to lend to this evaluation. In that regard, we would hope that your commitment to improving watershed health is based on the commitment of resources and good working relationships with the States and Tribes involved. Allowing state agencies and local stakeholders to be involved in all phases of development of watershed projects is critically important. That is the only way to insure an successful program.

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Phone (307) 777-7331 ◆ Fax (307) 777-3524

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This Office will require six copies of future information and documents regarding this project for continued distribution and review.

The State of Wyoming appreciates this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Art Reese

Art Reese
Director

AR:jh
Enclosures (2)
cc: Governor Geringer
Natural Resources Sub-Cabinet
Bobbie Frank, Wy. Assn. of Conservation Districts

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