



February 21, 2014

Governor Matt Mead  
State Capitol, 200 West 24<sup>th</sup> St.  
Cheyenne, WY 82002-0010

Dear Governor Mead,

We write regarding the Shoshone National Forest's revised land and resource management plan. As you know, the conservation community in Wyoming has participated in the plan revision process since it was initiated in the summer of 2005 and has worked with the Forest Service, your staff, local elected officials, citizens, and other stakeholders throughout. We'd like to convey our perspective on one aspect of the final plan and ask that you consider supporting an improvement that can be made prior to the record of decision. Namely, that a year-round, non-motorized prescription for two distinct areas on the forest—Francs Peak and Wood River—represents a good compromise and helps ensure the backcountry character of the Shoshone is retained and improved over the life of the new plan.

Stakeholders in Wyoming disagreed over management options throughout the long drafting process, particularly whether wilderness recommendations were necessary. A majority, however, agreed that safeguarding the backcountry qualities and sustainable recreational opportunities that make the Shoshone unique in the United States was important. And, notably, in a social values study funded by the state of Wyoming, nearly half of surveyed residents in the four counties surrounding the Shoshone supported new wilderness recommendations as a means to ensure backcountry values were in fact protected. Although a vocal minority of stakeholders sought increased motorized access generally and as such, opposed new wilderness anywhere, few if any sought to allow motorized use in the Shoshone's highest quality backcountry areas.

Based on its own evaluation, the Forest Service determined there were four backcountry areas that had the highest wilderness potential: Francs Peak, Wood River, Trout Creek and the Dunoir. The Forest Service repeatedly told citizens both that wilderness recommendations for these areas were unnecessary and that motorized use was largely inappropriate. Its proposal instead was to manage these areas almost entirely for backcountry year-round non-motorized use. The Forest Service explained that this prescription—known as Management Area 1.3—would not compromise the areas' current largely non-motorized backcountry values, or their future wilderness potential. This compromise was retained in the draft forest plan.

Between the draft plan and the final plan, however, nearly 100,000 acres of MA 1.3 forest-wide has been replaced by prescriptions that allow both winter and summer motorized use. Of greatest concern to us and to our constituents is that many of these changes have occurred in Francs Peak and Wood River—two of the highest quality backcountry areas on the forest. The final plan offers no accompanying wilderness recommendations to offset this change.

Short of wilderness recommendations for these areas, which we support, we believe Francs Peak and Wood River can be managed to retain their backcountry characteristics with the MA 1.3 prescription. The final plan's authorization of expanded motorized use in these two premiere backcountry areas, however, fails to adequately safeguard the special values and future wilderness potential the Forest Service repeatedly said the MA 1.3 prescription could accomplish.

We hope that you will agree the MA 1.3 prescription is a fair compromise for Francs Peak and Wood River and that the final plan should reflect this. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to discussions with your staff about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Lisa McGee  
Wyoming Outdoor Council

Connie Wilbert  
Wyoming Chapter Sierra Club

Charles Drimal  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Sarah Walker  
Wyoming Wilderness Association

Peter Aengst  
The Wilderness Society