



## Wyoming Outdoor Council

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Fremont County Commission  
450 North 2<sup>nd</sup> St.  
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Dear Fremont County Commission,

On behalf of the Wyoming Outdoor Council, it is with respect and in the hope that we can begin a meaningful conversation that I write to you to address the county's involvement in the Shoshone National Forest's process to revise its 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan ("forest plan"). Since the summer of 2005 when the Shoshone National Forest initiated its forest plan revision, the Wyoming Outdoor Council has participated in public meetings and has been present at nearly all of the government cooperators' meetings. We share some of the county's frustration with various aspects of the forest planning process as well as its desire to ensure the process is reflective of the input of state agencies, local governments and the public.

As I mentioned during the May 6, 2008 Fremont County Commission meeting, the public is largely unaware that its county level elected officials are in a position to influence the future management of our National Forest lands. This is a unique opportunity in that not only can the public submit comments directly to the Forest Service, but we can look to our local elected officials in the hope that they will represent to the best of their ability a balanced viewpoint that reflects a diverse citizenry. The Wyoming Outdoor Council is concerned, however, that to date the Commission has not actively engaged people from all walks of life about what they'd like for the future of the Shoshone National Forest and has not communicated its formal positions to the public or asked for public feedback on those positions.

Although the Fremont County Land Use Plan ("LUP") addresses generally some of the county-wide goals and policies with respect to land use planning, the plan does not dictate certain positions now being advocated by the Commission within the Shoshone forest plan revision process. Mineral development, for example, undoubtedly plays an important role in the economy of our county and our state. Although the LUP acknowledges a generally favorable attitude towards mineral development, most people would agree that such development is not appropriate on every available acre of land in Fremont County.

The public has a vested interest in the future management of National Forest lands and we believe that the Commission should have invited the public to an open discussion

about the appropriateness of such development prior to taking a formal position within the plan revision process. This could have been easily accomplished by the Commission adding an agenda item to any of its regularly scheduled meetings in which the public could have provided feedback about whether it wanted new oil and gas leasing on acreage in the Shoshone National Forest. Instead, in what will likely come as a surprise to many residents, the Fremont County Commission (and other Commissions from adjacent counties to the forest) advocated in favor of opening up all inventoried roadless areas on the Shoshone National Forest to new oil and gas leasing.

We believe this position is out of step with the values of most of the citizens in Wyoming who cherish National Forest lands for recreation, hunting and fishing and other sustainable multiple uses. Our state and federal elected officials, too, have recognized that these lands contribute greatly to our quality of life in Wyoming and should be managed appropriately. Citizens from across the state are now calling for a greater balance with respect to oil and gas development, recognizing that some places—particularly our backcountry forest lands—are more valuable for wildlife, recreation and tourism than for industrial use. I invite you to read the recent publication (attached) that highlights this call for balance: “Creating a Balance: Wyoming’s Heritage and Energy Development, An Information Paper for Wyoming Decision Makers and Citizens.”

Mineral development is just one example in which the Commission has interpreted general aspects of the Fremont County LUP as validating specific positions it has put forward in the Shoshone forest plan revision process that may or may not be supported by the majority of its constituents. I ask the Commission to consider that inasmuch as it has often felt disenfranchised from the federal agencies’ processes, the public likewise may also feel unrepresented at times by its Commissioners. I ask the Commission to consider what it may do differently once the revision process is again underway just as it has called on the Forest Service to make certain adjustments.

A truly collaborative process within this and other federal land use planning processes, where diverse viewpoints are discussed and creative solutions are worked towards, requires opportunities for the public to engage with its elected officials as well as with the state and federal agencies. I would be grateful for the chance to meet with and talk to the Commission further about the opportunities for greater public involvement in the forest planning process. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Lisa McGee

CC: Becky Aus, Shoshone NF Supervisor  
Bryan Armel, Shoshone NF planner  
Mark Toft, Wyoming State Planning Office  
Randy Williams, Shoshone Cooperating Agency Coalition