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Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

The BLM currently manages 28,931 acres within the Planning Area as Wilderness Study Areas. Here, the BLM proposes to manage one unit to protect its wilderness characteristics. This closes the area to motorized use, fluid mineral leasing and contains no surface occupancy stipulation (with no exceptions, modifications or waivers). These restrictions on salable mineral development, renewable energy development, commercial woodcutting, along with the withdrawal of locatable mineral entry, exclusion of right-of-ways, and prohibition of all other surface-disturbing activities are not compatible with retaining or enhancing natural values (pp. 257-258; Record # LWC-6002, Proposed RMP). Managing additional areas for restrictive use is not justified and the proposed RMP Revision acknowledges the difficulty in managing the proposed unit:

> "The northern portion of the unit is adjacent to numerous summer homes and cabins, creating wildland-urban interface that may require mechanical thinning to prevent wildfire. The Billy Creek Road is a cherry-stemmed route in the northwest portion of the unit. The BLM manages a nonmotorized trail, the Poison Creek Trail, to provide hiking opportunities and access for anglers off of the Billy Creek Road. The unit is about 3.5 miles across at its widest point and approximately 0.25 mile wide at its narrowest location in the southern portion." (p. 439 of the Draft RMP)

I do not support the BLM proposal to manage additional lands for wilderness characteristics. In this instance, I request that the BLM reject Alternative D.

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General Comment			Global replace "*habitat requirements*" with "habitat objectives" as it occurs in numerous places incorrectly throughout the document.
SS WL-4023	61 and 185	MA # SS WL-4023 states: "priority will be given to leasing fluid mineral resources outside of priority habitat."	This priority has been represented to the state as an objective and not as a management action. Regardless, MA # SS WL-4023 should be deleted.
SS WL-4025	61	MA # SS WL-4025 states: "priority will be given to leasing fluid mineral resources outside of priority habitat."	This priority has been represented to the state as an objective and not as a management action. Regardless, MA # SS WL-4025 should be deleted.
2.5.6. Regional Mitigation for Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management	78 through 79	BLM states that "the intent of the Proposed Plan is to provide a net conservation gain to the species." Wyoming strategy is mitigation. If a project conforms to the management prescriptions contained in EO 2015-4, no additional mitigation is required."	To rectify this inconsistency, the BLM should add the following language: "in PHMAs that exceed the threshold of 5% disturbance and an average of 1 activity per 640 acres, the BLM will require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species."
Table 2.4	89	Footnote 1 for each of these tables provides: "*Seasonal dates can be adjusted by local unit according to geographic region.*" This is inconsistent with EO 2015-4 and within the amendment document.	EO 2015-4 provides: "Where credible data support different timeframes for these seasonal restrictions, dates may be shifted 14 days prior to or subsequent to the above dates, but not both." This language should be adopted in Table 2.4.
Water-1005	132	Although Water-1005, which is written as more as an objective than a management action, broadly protects water quality, the Proposed RMP does not specifically	I request the BLM add a management action with the language from the Bighorn Basin Record #1041: "Allow BLM

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		address protections to source water and sensitive aquifers, as other recent RMPs do.	authorized activities and infrastructure in Source Water Protection Areas identified in Wellhead or Source Water Protection Plans approved by local governing bodies and "High" and "Moderately High" sensitivity aquifer systems identified through the use of the Wyoming Groundwater Vulnerability Assessment Handbook or similar document as updated over time, with site specific plans to prevent contamination of these sensitive water resources."
Water-1010	132	Existing language: "*Maintain existing water supply sources where possible, otherwise supply new water sources to meet demand and need, consistent with other resources.*" Language should be clarified to indicate state regulatory role in water resource development.	Recommended revised text: "Maintain existing water supply sources where possible, otherwise supply new water sources to meet demand and need, consistent with other resources. Coordinate the permitting process with the State Engineer's Office."
Water-1011	132	I support the provision under Record # Water-1011, Alternative D (Proposed RMP) to allow conversion of abandoned oil and gas wells to water supply wells if a beneficial use can be demonstrated.	I request the following modification to Record # Water-1011: "Allow abandoned oil and gas wells to be converted to water supply wells if a beneficial use, as determined by the State Engineer's Office, ~~(livestock, recreation, and wildlife)~~ can be demonstrated."
Water-1013	133	Allowing "surface disturbance within 500 feet of springs, non-CBNG reservoirs, water wells, or perennial	Suggest changing the language to "Allow surface disturbance within 500 feet of

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		streams where water and other resource objectives (including, but not limited to soil, slope, and vegetation) can be met" does not provide any additional protections for these sensitive resources; all BLM lands are managed to ensure other resource objectives (including, but not limited to soil, slope, and vegetation) can be met. Use of the term "allow" in this management action and many others does not point out the value and sensitivity of these resources to the BLM managers. This is inconsistent with all other RMPs in the state, as well as the next MA # 1014 which applies a CSU to those lands. The protections in #1014 should be provided for all surface disturbing activities, not just those from O&G.	springs, non-CBNG reservoirs, water wells, or streams with approved site-specific plans to prevent erosion and protect water quality and aquatic habitat."
Table 2.12	138	Goal MR:3.4 provides: "Priority will be given to leasing and development of fluid mineral resources, including geothermal, outside of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. When analyzing leasing and authorizing development of fluid mineral resources, including geothermal, in priority habitat (core population areas and core population connectivity corridors) and general habitat, and subject to applicable stipulations for the conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse, priority will be given to development in non-habitat areas first and then in the least suitable habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse. The implementation of these priorities will be subject to valid existing rights and any applicable law or regulation, including, but not limited to, 30 U.S.C. 226(p) and 43 CFR 3162.3-1(h)."	Goal MR:3.4 should be deleted.
O&G-2006	140	BLM provides that "Areas closed to oil and gas leasing	I request that you remove the following

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		are closed to geophysical exploration." BLM should not close areas to geophysical exploration merely because such areas are off limits to oil and gas leasing. In general, geophysical exploration provides operators a better understanding of subsurface mineral resource. Such knowledge reduces the probability of dry-hole or uneconomic wells being drilled. Additionally, fewer dry-holes results in less surface disturbance from well-pad construction. Here, a prohibition of geophysical exploration in areas closed to leasing would create difficulties to oil and gas operators in gaining a complete understanding of the subsurface mineral resource. This uncertainty could result in oil and gas operator decisions to not develop adjacent leasable minerals, or result in drilling of more dry holes and in turn more surface disturbance.	language from MA # O&G-2006: "Areas closed to oil and gas leasing are closed to geophysical exploration."
Riparian-4008	156	See Water 1013 comment.	Change to: "Allow surface disturbance within 500 feet of riparian/wetland systems and aquatic habitats with approved site-specific plans to prevent erosion and protect riparian/wetland and aquatic habitat."
SS WL- 4022	184	MA # SS WL-4022 states: "*Within general Greater Sage-Grouse habitat (outside core population and connectivity areas) overhead powerlines will be located at least 0.5 miles from Greater Sage-Grouse breeding and nesting grounds (PRB Final EIS).*"	EO 2015-4 does not establish a buffer for overhead powerlines in non-core - it is our preference to sight transmission lines in non-core. I request that you remove this language to achieve consistency.
SS WL-4022	184	*"Agricultural and residential lines will be considered to*	I suggest removing raptor perching

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		be adequately mitigated for Greater Sage-Grouse if constructed at least 0.6 mile from the lek perimeter with appropriate timing constraints and installation of raptor deterrents."	deterrents language and inserting language to follow APLIC guidelines.
SS WL-4023	185	The BLM establishes a priority for "*leasing fluid mineral resources outside of priority habitat.*" This priority has been represented to the state as an objective and not as a management action.	Paragraph two of Record # SS WL-4023 should be deleted.
SS WL-4023	185	"*Within Priority Habitat (Core Population Areas and Core Population Connectivity Corridors), leases should be a minimum of 640 contiguous acres of federal mineral estate...*"	The third paragraph of Record # SS WL-4023 is unnecessary in light of Record # SS WL-4024 (pp. 1996 through 1997) and SS WL-4024 (pp. 1999 through 2000) and should be deleted.
SS WL-4024	186	"*Allow on average no more than 1 energy or mining facility and on average no more than 5% total surface disturbance per 640 acres within the DDCT analysis area.*" This action is inconsistent with EO 2015-4.	To achieve consistency, replace the word "facility" with "activity."
SS WL-4024	190	*"Vegetation treatments in nesting and wintering habitat that would reduce sagebrush canopy cover to less than 15% would not be conducted unless it can be shown to be beneficial to sage-grouse habitat and removal of sagebrush canopy cover below 15% will be subject to the DDCT."*	Use WGFD protocols
SS WL-4024	190	Attachment B to EO 2015-4 provides: "Locate new collector or arterial roads that will have relatively high levels of activity (accessing multiple wells, housing development) greater than 1.9 miles from the perimeter of occupied Greater sage-grouse leks (Lyons and	BLM "collector" or "local" roads, as defined in the BLM Gold Book, would correspond to the definition of "collector" or "arterial" roads in EO 2015-4. Correspondingly, BLM "resource" roads,

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		Anderson 2003). Locate new local roads used to provide facility site access and maintenance greater than 0.6 miles from the perimeter of occupied Greater sage-grouse leks. Construct roads to minimum design standards needed for production activities." In EO 2015-4, collector or arterial roads are defined as: "single-lane or double-lane roads, with travel ways 12 to 24 feet in width. They collect traffic from local roads and connect to arterial roads or public highways. They are operated for intermittent or constant service." Local roads are defined as: "single-lane roads with travel ways 12 to 14 feet in width. They connect terminal facilities, such as well sites, to collector, local, arterial, or other higher-class roads. They are operated for low-volume traffic."	as defined in the BLM Gold Book, would correspond to the definition of "local" roads in EO 2015-4. Modify MA # SS WL-4024 to conform with EO 2015-4.
SS WL-4024	191 and 194	EO 2015-4 requires a DDCT for buried utilities constructed in Core Population Areas.	Delete the following provision in MA # SS WL-4024: "Buried utilities constructed in designated utility corridors would not require that a DDCT be conducted."
SS WL-4024	188 and 189		Insert the following language concerning noise to be consistent with EO 2015-4: "New project noise levels, either individual or cumulative, should not exceed 10 decibels (as measured by L50) above baseline noise at the perimeter of the lek from 6:00 pm to 8:00 am during the breeding season (March 1-May 15). Specific noise protocols for measurement and implementation will be developed as

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			additional research and information emerges."
SS WL-4024 and SS WL-4025	19, 64, 188, 199, 203-207	*"Work with proponents to limit project related noise where it would be expected to reduce habitat functionality. The BLM would evaluate the potential for limitation of new noise sources on a case-by-case basis as appropriate. BLM's near-term goal would be to limit noise sources that would be expected to negatively impact priority habitat area sage-grouse populations and to continue to support the establishment of ambient baseline noise levels for occupied priority habitat area leks. As additional research and information emerges, specific new limitations appropriate to the type of projects being considered would be evaluated and appropriate limitations would be implemented where necessary to minimize potential for noise impacts on sage-grouse priority population behavioral cycles. As new research is completed, new specific limitations would be coordinated with the WGFD and partners. Noise levels at the perimeter of the lek should not exceed 10 dBA above ambient noise."*	Remove language for noise in connectivity. Additionally, noise should not have a stipulation outside core. Remove stipulation for non-core and connectivity in the appendices. Connectivity should be consistent with definitions, language and mapping set forth in EO 2015-4.
SS WL-4025	204 and 209	EO 2015-4 requires a DDCT for buried utilities constructed in Core Population Areas.	Delete the following provision in MA # SS WL-4025: "Buried utilities constructed in designated utility corridors would not require that a DDCT be conducted."
Chapter 2	198	*Prohibit overhead electric transmission lines. CSU requiring proponents to limit project related noise where it would be expected to reduce functionality of*	MA for connectivity should not include noise, transmission line management actions.

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		habitats that support priority habitat area populations. The BLM would evaluate the potential for limitation of new noise sources on a case-by-case basis as appropriate. BLM's near-term goal would be to limit noise sources that would be expected to negatively impact priority habitat area sage-grouse populations and to continue to support the establishment of ambient baseline noise levels for occupied priority habitat area leks. As additional research and information emerges, specific new limitations appropriate to the type of projects being considered would be evaluated and appropriate limitations would be implemented where necessary to minimize potential for noise impact on sage-grouse priority population behavioral cycles. As new research is completed, new specific limitations would be coordinated with the WGFD and partners. Noise levels at the perimeter of the lek should not exceed 10 dBA.	
RE-6004	239		In order to achieve consistency between all plans, please include the following language: "Within PHMAs, all RMPs are amended as follows: Wind energy development would be avoided in PHMAs and not allowed unless it can be sufficiently demonstrated that the development activity would not result in declines of PHMA populations. Sufficient demonstration of "no declines" should be coordinated with the WGFD and

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			USFWS."
Rec-6015	250	BLM states "do not construct new recreation facilities (e.g., campgrounds, trails, trailheads, staging areas) unless the development would have a net conservation gain to Greater Sage-Grouse habitat." The Wyoming strategy is mitigation. If a project conforms to the management prescriptions contained in EO 2015-4, no additional mitigation is required.	To rectify this inconsistency, the BLM should add the following language: "in PHMAs that exceed the threshold of 5% disturbance and an average of 1 activity per 640 acres, the BLM will require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species."
B.1.4. Step 4 - Apply Compensatory Mitigation or Reject/Defer Proposal; Mitigation	1793	BLM states: "In undertaking BLM/USFS management actions, and, consistent with valid existing rights and applicable law, in authorizing third party actions that result in habitat loss and degradation within PHMA, the BLM/USFS will require and assure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species including accounting for any uncertainty associated with the effectiveness of such mitigation." Wyoming strategy is mitigation. If a project conforms to the management prescriptions contained in EO 2015-4, no additional mitigation is required.	To rectify this inconsistency, the BLM should add the following language: "in PHMAs that exceed the threshold of 5% disturbance and an average of 1 activity per 640 acres, the BLM will require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species."
B.1.4. Step 4 - Apply Compensatory Mitigation or Reject/Defer Proposal; Mitigation	1793	The document notes that "[t]he BLM/USFS, via the WAFWA Management Zone Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Team, will develop a WAFWA Management Zone Regional Mitigation Strategy..."	The Sage-Grouse Implementation Team serves as the oversight team in implementing Wyoming's strategy and the Wyoming State Legislature established the Team as a statutory body (§ W.S. 9-19-101) to provide recommendations regarding regulatory actions necessary to maintain and enhance Greater sage-grouse populations in Wyoming. Both the BLM

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			and FS serve on that team. Establishment of a new team is unnecessary and inconsistent with Wyoming's strategy. Further, any regional mitigation strategy should be developed in consultation with the Sage-Grouse Implementation Team. Reword to reflect this strategy: "The BLM and Forest Service will participate in mitigation strategies prescribed by the states within each WAFWA Greater Sage-grouse Management Zone. State wildlife agencies and other agencies will coordinate mitigation efforts across jurisdictional boundaries to assure the integrity of conservation efforts in the region, and to assure mitigation results in effective conservation of the species and its habitats."
SS WL-4024	1993	The Stipulation applies a different seasonal use date of March 1 which is inconsistent with EO 2015-4.	Modify Management Action # SS WL-4024 Stipulation as follows: "No surface use is allowed March 15 – June 30 inside designated core areas."
D.3.1 Required Design Features	1866		See my comments in Attachments 2 and 3 concerning Required Design Features.
SS WL-4024	1995	This MA Stipulation is inconsistent with EO 2015-4.	To ensure consistency with EO 2015-4, modify the Stipulation to use the language in EO 2015-4.

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Appendix H, Fluid Mineral Lease Notices; Lease Stipulations; and the Process for Exceptions, Modifications and Waivers, Management Action # SS WL-4024	1996		In the Exception section, make the following modification: "An exception to the stated limits may be granted when onsite and/or offsite mitigation…"
Appendix H, Fluid Mineral Lease Notices; Lease Stipulations; and the Process for Exceptions, Modifications and Waivers, Management Action # SS WL-4024	1999		In the Exception section, make the following modification: "An exception to the stated limits may be granted when onsite and/or offsite mitigation…"
Appendix W. Buffalo Water Resources Management	2623	Although briefly noted in Chapter 3 on page 333 ("*Regulatory issues regarding water in the planning area are largely handled by the Wyoming DEQ and the Wyoming State Engineers Office (WSEO).*"), the scope	Add a new bullet to acknowledge state statutes and regulations to W.1.2. "State Statutes, Rules and Regulations -- Wyoming Statute 41 charges the State

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Plan		of regulatory authority should be clarified.	Engineer's Office (SEO) with statewide water appropriation, regulation and administration. The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Division is responsible for managing water quality through the Wyoming Environmental Quality Act W.S. 35-11-101, et seq. and the Wyoming Water Quality Rules and Regulations." These statutes should also be listed under Appendix A.