

Phoonswadi-Brewer, Sean

From: Lander RMP
Subject: comments on Lander RMP

From: Lesley Wischmann [mailto:lesleywisch@wyoming.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 19, 2012 4:25 PM
To: BLM_WY_LRMP_WYMail
Subject: comments on Lander RMP

Re: Lander RMP

I am writing as a private citizen to express my support for the efforts that the Lander BLM Field Office proposes to take to preserve the National Historic Trails within its management boundaries. As all historic trail enthusiasts know, the stretch of historic trail corridor from Independence Rock to True Parting of the Ways is the best preserved, most historically significant contiguous stretch of historic trails remaining in the United States. Having personally explored these trails from their jumping off points in Missouri to their terminus in Oregon, Utah and California, I know from personal experience that there is simply nothing like that segment and the National Park Service was absolutely correct when they designated this a high potential segment in the comprehensive management plan, developed in the late 1990s. As Wyomingites, we are so privileged to have this incredible history within our state's boundaries and we have a sacred duty to preserve these remnants for future generations.

In general, I believe that what the Lander BLM is proposing in their preferred alternative addresses most of the concerns that I have about how these trails will be managed in the future. I also believe that it is extremely important that the BLM work on improving and expanding interpretive materials for the section of trails within their jurisdiction so that the public will have a greater understanding of what they are seeing and what the emigrants endured to build this country. This is important not only for continued preservation efforts but also to encourage increased heritage tourism in this area so that those who would argue for uses of these lands that are incompatible with trail preservation, such as high-profile energy development, will understand that economic development comes in many forms and tourism is a good and beneficial use of these lands that is compatible with preservation while supporting the local economy. I would also hope that new technologies (QR codes, etc.) can be used on signs and brochures to help these heritage tourists access the wealth of information that exists regarding the history and prehistory of this region.

I do have a couple of issues to raise which I hope the Lander BLM will consider as they implement this resource management plan. First of all, it is imperative that this area be managed for the enjoyment of everyone, regardless of their background or faith tradition. The BLM needs to ensure that the richness of the emigrant story be remembered and celebrated and that no one perspective be allowed to monopolize the story of this region. While it does appear that the conflicts and concerns that were much in evidence in this area in the early 2000s have subsided, thanks in part to the efforts of the Lander BLM, I hope that you will remain vigilant in this regard to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and able to celebrate the trail experience in their own way at all locations along the trails under your supervision.

Another issue that I hope you will tackle is the need to establish solid boundaries for the National Register of Historic Places listing of the South Pass National Historic Landmark. I believe that the lack of defined and defensible boundaries for this landmark has created problems in the past and will continue to do so in the future until this issue is resolved. While this may not be something that the BLM normally works on, they surely could work with other nonprofits or state organizations to push for the establishment of firm boundaries. Defined

boundaries should help to minimize future conflicts over multiple use issues such as occurred with the placer gold mine at Dickie Springs in the mid 2000s.

I also hope that the Lander BLM will work closely with the Rock Springs BLM as they begin to develop their RMP to make sure that management of the NPS-defined South Pass High Potential Segment be managed effectively and efficiently. It is most unfortunate that the management of an area that is so historically significant should be split between two management agencies. But since fate has placed this resource within two district offices, I trust you will ensure that the Lander BLM remains in close contact with the Rock Springs BLM to ensure that management of the area is seamless and consistent between field offices.

Finally, I hope that you will be creative as the management plan is implemented in looking for ways to ensure that restoration of degraded trail segments occurs where necessary and possible. One possible way to accomplish this would be to ensure that high profile, high impact projects that may be proposed in other areas of the management plan be required to pay for off-site compensatory mitigation for cumulative effects of development through the NEPA process. In the past, in most BLM field offices, impacts to cultural resources have been mitigated solely through the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act. Yet, Section 106 limits the mitigation response to on-site efforts and, quite often, these efforts are simply not really adequate to compensate the public for what is being lost through the cumulative impact of these many projects. I hope the Lander field office will keep a comprehensive list of segments in need of restoration as well as any opportunities to acquire significant lands containing trail segments so that, when resources are adversely affected by developments, resource advocates will be able to turn to the field office professional staff to determine what other opportunities exist to enhance the resource in another location. It should no longer be acceptable to replace on-the-ground, tangible resources with intangible, virtual resources like a brochure or video or website. What has always made Wyoming unique is the ability here to touch the past. If we lose that on-the-ground experience, no amount of museum displays will ever make up for what we will have taken from our children and grandchildren. The average citizen has few ways to ensure that these kinds of exchanges are truly adequate to compensate the public for their loss of heritage. We have to rely on the professional staff in agencies such as the BLM to make sure that the public interest is truly represented.

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on your draft RMP and appreciate the obvious concern and sensitivity you have shown in the drafting of this document about the importance and irreplaceable nature of the resources that have been entrusted to you for protection.

Sincerely,

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