

840 Kimberly Ct.
Lander, WY 82520
January 20, 2012

BLM Lander Field Office
1335 Main St.
Lander, WY 82520

Attn: RMP Project Manager

To Whom It May Concern:



This is to comment on the Lander Resource Area, Resource Management Plan.

I am a WWII veteran, a native of Fremont County, of pioneer stock, and raised on a ranch near Lander. I first became acquainted, and then concerned, with the greater Green Mountain- Sweetwater Grazing District in 1945. My war experiences were such that I needed a place to retreat, restore my soul, and heal. That was where I went.

My studies at the University of Wyoming involved a lot of range management and as I progressed and revisited the area, I became more concerned. There had been virtually no management of the area during the war years and grazing interests took advantage of that fact. Overgrazing was readily apparent over the greater area but most apparent in and around the springs, sloughs, and riparian areas. The effects of that period of time have never been adequately addressed.

The reason it has not been addressed lies in the fact that western livestock interests are politically powerful. They not only exert considerable influence through congressional representatives and county commissioners but also through appointed Interior Secretaries. If a rancher doesn't like a decision on the ground, he simply picks up the phone and calls his Senator. That message quickly gets to the Secretary, the State BLM Director, the field manager, and then to the guy who made the decision. It is no wonder there is so much low morale in the BLM.

There never seemed to be any recourse for whatever the rancher wanted. Now, thanks to the Endangered Species Act, there is a tool to get a handle on the grievous treatment of the land and the ecosystem itself. The population of the Greater Sage Grouse has declined precipitously, in no small part just because of the way ranchers abrogated their responsibilities in stewardship of the lands and water of the public domain.

In the legal action by Advocates of the West for better management of what has been termed the Green Mountain Common Allotment, specific references were made to long standing overgrazing problems, lack of good and proper management of riparian areas, against any new fencing, and dealing with the overriding problem of how to maintain sage grouse populations. To the credit of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the BLM, the proposed Lander RMP includes an ACEC which will help solve these problems. But the RMP falls far short in setting forth the management efforts to adequately maintain the sage grouse. The Advocates say, "Special management attention requires the formulation of management practices expressly developed for the area to protect the important and relevant values from uses permitted by the RMP." I agree.

The Advocates then propose a "Modified Sage Grouse ACEC" and say, "The ACEC will be managed with the goal of recovering sage grouse habitats and populations." I agree with all of their recommendations and recommend they be incorporated into the plan.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Bell

cc : Natalie J. Havlina
Jonathan B. Ratner

