

Appendix C.
Public Comments on Draft Environmental Assessment
and Agency Responses

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Letter	Name	Group Represented
1	Trudy Pridgeon	Crook County Land Use Planning & Zoning Commission
2	John Emmerich	Wyoming Game and Fish Department
3	Jay Hein	Wyoming State Forestry Division

Comments are listed in order of receipt.

Letter/ Comment Number	Comment	Response
1-1	<p>Crook County Land Use Planning & Zoning Commission appreciates this opportunity to submit comments on the draft EA for the Snyder Forest Management Project. After reviewing the three alternatives presented in the EA, we have the following observations and suggestions to share.</p> <p>We continue to strongly support the project’s purpose of moving the project area toward Forest Plan desired conditions, which includes reduction of fuels and fire hazard and the risk of mountain pine beetle infestation, production of a sustainable supply of timber, and improvement of wildlife habitat. Our previous comments on this project regarding less restricted off-road motorized travel, where feasible, within the project area and close collaboration with Crook County regarding county road issues within the project area remain important to us.</p> <p>There are several aspects of Alternative 2 that we favor over those proposed by Alternative 1, and suggest that the proposed action be modified to incorporate them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative 2 calls for the least acres of year-round closure to off-road motorized use and seasonal (winter only) closures for wildlife concerns. (Alternative 1 proposes year-round closure of almost 11,000 acres within the project area.) • Alternative 2 proposes 4,113 acres for treatment with commercial timber harvest and only 825 acres with prescribed fire. (Alternative 1 proposes a whopping 4,808 acres of treatment with prescribed fire and 3,256 acres through timber harvest.) <p>We had commented during the scoping period for this project our concerns that proper repair and maintenance be provided for Forest Service Roads #838 and #832. Based on Maps 11, 12, and 13 in the back of the draft EA, it appears that all three action alternatives call for maintenance of those roads.</p> <p>Overall, the project appears to be within the scope of and to comply with the Forest Plan and Phase 2 Amendment direction. We feel that the information presented in this analysis is sufficient to implement the proposed activities.</p>	Comments noted.
2-1	<p><u>Terrestrial Considerations:</u> From a wildlife perspective, there are positives and negatives to all of the action alternatives proposed. It is unfortunate that treatment practices to create diversity</p>	Comment noted.

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	within timber stands (patch cuts and uneven aged management) were proposed somewhat exclusively, rather than in combination, under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3. We encourage the USFS to consider implementing a variety of treatment methods across the project area in the final EIS.	
2-2	We recommend limiting silvicultural practices and prescribed fire in the Wood Canyon Walk-In Hunting area as much as possible during the fall big game season (Sept. 1-Nov. 30) and spring turkey season (April 10-May 20) to reduce conflicts with hunters. Such action will also serve to minimize disturbance of game and negatively impact hunter's overall experience and chances for success during the hunting season.	The EA contains a provision to conduct activities in the walk-in hunting area outside hunting seasons if possible. It may not be possible to avoid hunting seasons, however. Other requirements (timing of operations near goshawk nests, avoiding damp soils, etc.) may restrict operations, and an additional blanket restriction during hunting seasons could result in an unrealistically short operating season.
2-3	Any decisions or changes made to travel management in the project area should conform to foreseeable direction of the forest wide travel management plan currently being drafted. Special attention should be given to travel orders in the project area to provide long-term consistency in allowable motor vehicle use.	The forest-wide travel management planning process is ongoing. A preferred alternative has not been identified, so there is currently no foreseeable direction.
2-4	Some of the higher elevations of the project area are delineated on our seasonal range maps as spring/summer/fall range for white-tailed deer. Significant portions of the lower elevations are delineated as crucial winter/yearlong range. Management actions should maintain and improve the quality of these habitats, especially within those stands in management area 5.4 and specifically those that are also delineated as crucial winter/yearlong range. During the Final EIS, we recommend treatments proposed within MA 5.4 within designated crucial winter/yearlong range should be considered primarily for forage and thermal cover enhancement, and use of motorized vehicle minimized from December 1 st through April 1 st . Our seasonal range maps should be consulted for delineation of other seasonal big game ranges in MA 5.4. If on the ground observation does not seem to match the defined seasonal ranges, a coordinated effort should be made between USFS and our field personnel to update these seasonal range maps.	<p>Alternatives 2 and 3 propose treatments in MA 5.4 (winter range) to improve forage.</p> <p>All action alternatives would restrict off-road motorized travel in MA 5.4 from Dec. 15 through May 15 in accordance with Forest Plan standard 5.4-9101.</p> <p>Wyoming Game and Fish big game range maps provided to the Forest Service in March 2008 show white-tailed deer crucial winter/yearlong range occupying much of the southern part of the project area. Alternatives 1 and 3 propose patch cuts in this area, which would increase forage. All action alternatives also include burning and various other silvicultural treatments in the area identified as crucial winter/yearlong range.</p>
2-5	<u>Aquatic Considerations:</u> We support any work the Forest can do to promote aspen regeneration during the Snyder Project. We also recommend that safe access to Cook Lake, a popular recreational fishery in the project area, be maintained throughout the life of the	Alternative 1 would enhance and expand aspen through patch cut/aspen enhancement treatments (270 acres). Proposed burning would also be expected to enhance aspen inclusions.

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	project.	None of the alternatives would affect access to Cook Lake.
3-1	<p>We would like to extend our support of the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) as well as Alternative 2 within the draft EA. We feel both alternatives will have a positive impact on the health and productivity of the forest within the landscape. With the current challenges faced by natural resource managers across all ownerships, it is imperative that the U.S. Forest Service takes an aggressive stance towards managing their forests. Mills are shutting down at alarming rates, and the Black Hills is one of the few places left where there is much of an industry. With so much of Wyoming's forested ownership falling on the Federal Government, forest industry has to rely heavily upon the U.S. Forest Service to provide a sustainable supply of timber. Both Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 will increase the flow of products to the mills, with Alternative 2 being slightly higher. Also, both alternatives will be effective in increasing structural diversity within the project area, which is very important given the current beetle and drought problems we are facing in the west. We hope the Forest will implement the planned silvicultural treatments and look forward to seeing future projects as well.</p>	Comment noted.