



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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January 13, 2026

WER 14581.02

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Tensleep Canyon Climbing Management Plan

Draft Environmental Assessment

Washakie County

Mike Thom

Powder River District Ranger

1415 Fort Street

Buffalo, WY 82834

Dear Mr. Sorenson,

The staff of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) has reviewed the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service Tensleep Canyon Climbing Management Plan Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). The Department is statutorily charged with managing and protecting all Wyoming wildlife (W.S. 23-1-103). Pursuant to our mission, we offer the following comments for your consideration.

The Department provided comment for this project (WER's 14581.00 and 14581.01) during the March 2021 and November 2023 scoping periods. We commend the USDA for considering our previous comments and including plan design features in the EA Appendix A, to address many of the Department's concerns. We appreciate the opportunity for continued collaboration and recommend the following:

The State of Wyoming's Sage-Grouse Executive Order 2019-3 (SGEO)

While the management planning area is outside of habitat designated as Core Population Area, the SGEO provides no surface occupancy protections within 0.25 miles and seasonal timing stipulations within 2.0 miles of an occupied non-Core area lek. Project activities planned in Sections 12, 13, 23, 26, and 27, T48N, R87W, are within 2 miles of a non-core, occupied, sage-grouse lek. Development and construction within two miles of this lek are subject to timing limitation stipulations March 15 – June 30 where breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing habitat is present and should be assessed in the EA.

The State of Wyoming's Big Game Migration Corridor Executive Order 2020-1 (MCEO)

There is no project overlap with habitat designated as a mule deer or antelope migration corridor. However, the EA should reference the MCEO and briefly detail compliance.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action, page 8 – *Install boot scrapers and educational signage at parking lot trailhead with information related to rock climbing best practices; cultural resource history and protection; sensitive wildlife and botanical species; and human and pet waste management.* The Department recommends including information on educational signage regarding the following bat conservation measures:

- Providing information regarding best management practices to prevent the spread of White-Nose Syndrome in bats, including cleaning protocol for cleaning climbing gear.
- Providing direction to report large groups of bats found on climbing routes to the Department and the Forest Service.

Appendix A. Design Features, Wildlife – Wildlife 1, page 4: Restrict project-related construction activities (including route development) during season wildlife closures.

- ***January 15-July 31: within 0.5 mile of golden eagle nest ledges (eyries)*** – For consistency with nest descriptions used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department, we recommend editing the seasonal wildlife closure for golden eagles as follows: *January 15-July 31: within 0.5 mile of golden eagle nest.*
- ***March 1-August 15: within 0.5 mile of peregrine falcon nests*** – For consistency with nest descriptions used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department, we recommend editing the seasonal wildlife closure for peregrine falcons as follows: *March 1-August 15: within 0.5 mile of peregrine falcon nest ledge (eyrie).*
- ***November 15-April 30: in elk crucial range and deer and elk winter range*** – The project overlaps with habitat delineated as crucial winter-yearlong range for both elk and mule deer. The Department recommends seasonal timing stipulations only for project activities occurring within delineated big game crucial winter and crucial winter-yearlong ranges. Habitat delineated as big game winter range is not subject to timing stipulations. We recommend editing the big game seasonal wildlife closure as follows: *November 15-April 30: in elk and mule deer crucial winter-yearlong range.*
- ***May 1-June 20: in sensitive calving or fawning areas*** – Given the project overlaps habitat delineated as elk parturition areas and for consistency with the Department's standard management descriptions, we recommend editing as follows: *May 1-June 20: in elk parturition areas.*
- ***September 15-May 15: for caves with bats using the cave as a hibernacula roost*** – In Wyoming, bats will often hibernate in rock crevices. To protect these sensitive roosting areas, we recommend editing as follows: *September 15-May 15: for caves/crevices with bats using the cave/crevice as a hibernacula roost.*
- ***April 1-October 1: for caves with bats using the cave for maternity roosts*** – In Wyoming, bats will often form maternity roosts in rock crevices. To protect these sensitive roosting areas, we recommend editing as follows: *April 1-October 1: for caves/crevices with bats using the cave/crevice as a maternity roost.*

Mike Thom
January 13, 2026
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Chris Henkel, Habitat Protection Biologist, at 307-777-2533.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Schultz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Will Schultz
Habitat Protection Supervisor

WS/ch

cc: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Chris Wichmann, Wyoming Department of Agriculture