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Comments: The Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments (OSLI) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG) plan amendment, and offers the following comments relative to the mission of this office.

OSLI's goal is to effectively manage natural resources and funds for current and future generations. To that end, OSLI manages its assets for two key purposes consistent with traditional trust principles: (1) long term growth in value, and (2) optimum, sustainable revenue production. These principles guide both allocation of resources and land management practices. Because the Board of Land Commissioners and OSLI are responsible for managing these trust assets for short- and long- term returns to the beneficiaries, we are quite interested in any action that could impact land use and/or development on state trust lands.

As a landowner in the State of Wyoming, OSLI and its grazing and agricultural lessees are responsible for the control of noxious weeds and pests, including Prairie dogs. On the TBNG, state trust lands are intermingled with both private and federal lands. In most cases, the state grazing leases are sublet to the grazing associations and are managed along with their federal allotments. In order to ensure the effective utilization of limited Prairie dog control resources on state trust lands, it is essential that both boundary and density control be conducted concurrently on adjacent federal lands. Additionally, it is critical that all control tools, both those currently available and potentially available in the future, be included in the plan for federal land managers to control Prairie dog populations on the TBNG.

A plan for controlling Prairie dogs that is both feasible and implementable is absolutely necessary for effective control across the unique land ownership pattern of the TBNG. It is my sincere desire that this plan amendment puts all stakeholders on the TBNG in the best possible position to avoid the uncontrollable, high-density Prairie dog population explosions that have been so detrimental to agricultural producers in the past. To that end, OSLI supports a plan that combines the elements of Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 in the DEIS that provide the most flexibility for effective adaptive management of Prairie dogs on the TBNG.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment and look forward to our continued participation in this process. If we may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact this office.