



Wyoming
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture

Mark Gordon, *Governor*
Doug Miyamoto, *Director*
2219 Carey Ave. • Cheyenne, WY 82002
Phone: (307) 777-7321 • Fax: (307) 777-6593
Web: agriculture.wy.gov • Email: wda1@wyo.gov

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

October 5, 2026

Bobby Nasset
Basin Electric Power Cooperative
1717 East Interstate Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58503
info@basinelectricpower.com

Dear Mr. Nasset,

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) comments requested for the Proposed Laramie River-to-Belfield 345-kV Transmission Line Project (project).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life. As the proposed project could affect our industry, citizens, and natural resources it is important that you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide the opportunity to communicate pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed project. Based on preliminary project descriptions, the proposed line will cross into Wyoming to connect with the Laramie River Station in Platte County, primarily traversing private agricultural lands.

Due to final routing and placement details remaining flexible, establishing strong, proactive relationships with local private landowners should be the project proponent's primary objective. The WDA strongly encourages the proponent to engage directly with affected landowners early in the planning process to develop comprehensive construction, weed management, biosecurity, and reclamation plans tailored to each property.

Specifically, the WDA recommends the project proponent address the following in its planning efforts:

1. **Construction & Operational Coordination:** Work directly with landowners to schedule construction activities around day-to-day farming and ranching operations, including seasonal livestock movement, calving/lambing, planting, and harvesting. Ensure proper maintenance of temporary access roads to mitigate dust, control traffic, and prevent disruption to irrigation and drainage systems. Fences and gates must be kept intact and left as found to prevent stock displacement.
2. **Weed Management:** Coordinate directly with the Platte County Weed and Pest Control District and individual landowners to establish a formal Weed Management Plan. This should include cleaning procedures for heavy machinery prior to entering new parcels to prevent the introduction and spread of noxious or invasive weeds.
3. **Reseeding & Forage Selection:** Consult with individual landowners to select property-specific seed and forage mixes that match localized soil types, existing vegetation, and management goals prior to re-establishing cover.

Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services

BOARD MEMBERS

Aaron Clark, *District 1* • James Rogers, *District 2* • Kim Bright, *District 3* • Amanda Furnival, *District 4* • Mike Riley, *District 5*
Jody Bagley, *District 6* • Larry Krause, *District 7*

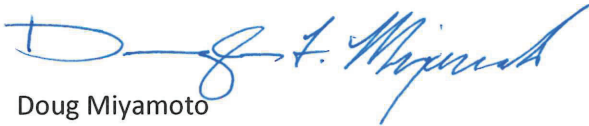
YOUTH BOARD MEMBERS

Meredith Halweg, *Southwest* • Emma Mercer, *Northwest* • Hadley Manning, *Southwest* • Lexi Bauder, *Northeast*

4. Long-Term Reclamation & Monitoring: Develop a comprehensive reclamation plan to return all disturbed landscapes to their pre-construction condition. This plan should include a multi-year post-construction monitoring timeframe (e.g., 3 to 5 years) to ensure successful vegetation re-establishment and sustained weed control.

The WDA appreciates Basin Electric's commitment to responsible infrastructure development and looks forward to working together as project details advance. Please contact Holly Siebert, Senior Policy Analyst, at 307-777-7024 if you have any questions or require further consultation.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto
Director

DM/hs

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming County Commissioners Association
Public Lands Council



Wyoming
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture

Mark Gordon, *Governor*
Doug Miyamoto, *Director*
2219 Carey Ave. • Cheyenne, WY 82002
Phone: (307) 777-7321 • Fax: (307) 777-6593
Web: agriculture.wy.gov • Email: wda1@wyo.gov

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

October 5, 2026

Director
Ecosystem Management Coordinator
201 14th St SW
Mailstop 1108
Washington, DC 20250-1124

Dear Director:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) comments regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposal to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001 Rule) along with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life. As the proposed project could affect our industry, citizens, and natural resources it is important that you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide the opportunity to communicate pertinent issues and concerns.

The Purpose and Need statement found on page 10 includes: "...there is a need to increase local management flexibility and, where necessary, allow for active management to respond to changing and localized conditions, such as increasing wildfire risk, the spread of insect and disease infestations, and the need for community protection in the wildland-urban interface."

Based on the Purpose and Need statement, WDA believes Alternative 2 is the only reasonable option for the USDA to select as its preferred alternative. Alternative 2 rescinds the 2001 Roadless Rule in its entirety, eliminates nationwide prohibitions on road construction and timber harvesting, and removes the Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) designation from 44.7 million acres.

While WDA appreciates the effort to develop Alternative 3, which removes 31.7 million acres from Roadless Rule prohibitions, the option still retains 13 million acres under the 2001 Rule. Maintaining these 13 million acres preserves national-level management direction, failing to provide the "local management flexibility" highlighted in the Purpose and Need statement.

Local management flexibility, coupled with public input on forest decisions, is always the preferred approach. These decisions can be formally established through Forest Plan Amendments or Revisions. Desired conditions for vegetation, soil, timber, and riparian areas are best determined at the Plan level. National-level prohibitions under the 2001 Rule are not only inappropriate, but ineffective.

The 2001 Rule misleads the public by creating the illusion of total protection against road construction and future timber management. However, the DEIS fails to disclose the mileage of existing roads still retained within these 44.7

Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services

BOARD MEMBERS

Aaron Clark, *District 1* • James Rogers, *District 2* • Kim Bright, *District 3* • Amanda Furnival, *District 4* • Mike Riley, *District 5*
Jody Bagley, *District 6* • Larry Krause, *District 7*

YOUTH BOARD MEMBERS

Meredith Halweg, *Southeast* • Emma Mercer, *Northwest* • Hadley Manning, *Southwest* • Lexi Bauder, *Northeast*

million acres. The public often assumes that all existing roads were decommissioned when the 2001 Rule took effect; in reality, many pre-existing roads were retained rather than decommissioned.

Another common misconception is that fully rescinding the 2001 Rule will lead to immediate road construction and the loss of remote settings. In reality, because many existing roads were never decommissioned, they can be utilized for necessary vegetation and timber management, reducing or eliminating the need to construct new roads.

If desired conditions for a project area include remote settings, the Forest Plan can designate those areas directly, without relying on the 2001 Rule. Likewise, if a project aims to enhance wildlife habitat through age-class and species diversity, the Forest Plan can identify these target areas and use project-level National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to ensure meaningful local input.

WDA reiterates our scoping comments supporting targeted livestock grazing in treatment areas to help achieve desired conditions and suppress invasive weeds or undesirable plant species. While the DEIS fails to analyze the potential environmental benefits of targeted livestock grazing, we recognize that individual forests can evaluate and incorporate this tool during project-level NEPA analysis.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to the USDA rescinding the 2001 Rule. If you have questions, please contact Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst at 307-777-7067.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto
Director

DM/jw

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming County Commissioners Association
Public Lands Council



October 8, 2026

Environmental Protection Agency
EPA Docket Center, Water Docket
Mail Code 28221T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2025-0322

To Whom It May Concern:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) comments regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Proposed Rule to update the definition for "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS) under the Clean Water Act (CWA).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life. As the proposed project could affect our industry, citizens, and natural resources it is important that you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide the opportunity to communicate pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA submitted comments January 5, 2026 advocating for a WOTUS definition which is clear, consistent, and strictly adheres to the judicial constraints established in *Sackett v. EPA*. For Wyoming's agricultural sector, fair and transparent jurisdictional boundaries are essential to undue regulatory burdens on farmers, ranchers, and rural stakeholders.

The WDA appreciates the agencies' efforts to offer alternative definitions for key terms, including 'relatively permanent' and 'continuous surface connection.' While the WDA supports a clear, predictable definition of 'relatively permanent,' incorporating the term 'perennial' must account for anomalous events (such as extreme droughts or temporary weather anomalies) that temporarily interrupt surface flow without stripping a water feature of its perennial classification. Furthermore, the WDA echoes the concerns raised by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) and strongly cautions against adopting a strict, 'perennial-only' interpretation. A rigid standard fails to account for Western hydrology and risks inappropriately excluding seasonally persistent, intermittent waters that serve critical regional functions. Finally, replacing the previous phrase 'under normal circumstances' with 'ordinary conditions' fails to resolve regulatory ambiguity. The term 'ordinary conditions' remains overly vague and still does not adequately accommodate the unique, highly variable hydrological realities of Wyoming.

The WDA urges the agencies to eliminate ambiguity in the definition of 'continuous surface connection' to give farmers and ranchers clear, predictable guidance on land use. While the WDA appreciates accounting for anomalous weather events, relying on vague terms like 'perennial' creates confusion on the ground. Echoing WDEQ's comments, the WDA supports restricting wetland jurisdiction strictly to features that physically 'abut' a jurisdictional water and maintain a

Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services

BOARD MEMBERS

Aaron Clark, *District 1* • James Rogers, *District 2* • Kim Bright, *District 3* • Amanda Furnival, *District 4* • Mike Riley, *District 5*
Jody Bagley, *District 6* • Larry Krause, *District 7*

YOUTH BOARD MEMBERS

Meredith Halweg, *Southeast* • Emma Mercer, *Northwest* • Hadley Manning, *Southwest* • Lexi Bauder, *Northeast*

direct, relatively permanent hydrologic connection. Any standard for surface connection must be simple, intuitive, and visually evident so agricultural producers can readily identify jurisdictional areas on their property.

Thank you for your commitment to partnering with State and local entities to bring regulatory certainty and efficiency to water quality improvement efforts across the country. Farmers and ranchers recognize that effective watershed management is vital to their operations and understand how shifting natural resource policies affect their land. WDA believes the Proposed Rule appropriately respects the primary role of States under CWA Section 101(b) to manage land and water resources. If you have questions, please contact Holly Siebert, Senior Policy Analyst at 307-777-7024.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto
Director

DM/jw

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming County Commissioners Association
Public Lands Council