

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



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80 WEST FLAMING GORGE WAY, SUITE 109 -
GREEN RIVER, WY 82935
PH: (307) 872-3890 - FAX - (307) 872-3992

Friday, December 09, 2016

Representative Jo Ann Dayton
738 D Street
Rock Springs, WY 82901

Senator Larry Hicks
P.O. Box 413
Baggs, WY 82321

Representative Tim Stubson
1645 South Chestnut
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Sweetwater County Wyoming comments in opposition to the Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee's Subcommittee on Public Lands proposed Public Land Constitutional Amendment and the transfer of lands to the State of Wyoming.

Dear Select Committee Members:

Sweetwater County strongly opposes the proposed public lands constitutional amendment for the following reasons:

The constitutional amendment requests residents to approve the management of federal lands that may be transferred to the state without first asking if they approve such a transfer. It seems to Sweetwater County, that the state should first ask its residents whether they believe that federal lands should be transferred to the state. Then, if the residents endorse such a transfer, the state legislature should pursue the proposed constitutional amendment or other management options. Otherwise, it is asking Wyoming citizens to decide how they might want property to be managed before they are asked if they want the property transferred.

In addition, if Wyoming residents vote to approve the management of such transferred federal lands, as proposed by the constitutional amendment, this approval may give the state legislature the false impression that the residents have endorsed the actual transfer of the lands.

With approximately 4.5 million acres of federal lands in Sweetwater County, we strongly believe that the state should reject any efforts, plans or schemes to transfer federal lands to the state whether for ownership or management, and we oppose the proposed constitutional amendment.

Our rejection and opposition are founded on the following assertions:

- the state may not be able to afford the proper management of federal lands
- the state does not have the administrative capacity or experience to manage this large amount of land
- there may be a loss of public access even with the constitutional amendment which gives access control to the state legislature
- there will be loss of environmental protections since the state does not have an environmental review process similar to NEPA nor is it likely to adopt one
- the constitutional amendment does not prohibit the sale of federal lands acquired by the state, and the provision to allow value for value land exchanges does not account for the impact of such exchanges on communities, hunting and fishing and other recreational opportunities
- without a state definition of multiple use or sustained yield in the proposed amendment, it is difficult to tell whether transferred lands will have the same multiple use opportunities or sustain yield requirements as they have under federal control

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SWEETWATER

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If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at 307-872-3897.

Sincerely,



Wally J. Johnson, Chairman
Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners

cc: Jerimiah Rieman, Natural Resource Policy Advisor, Governor's Office
Wyoming Congressional Delegation
Wyoming State Legislative Delegation - Sweetwater County
Senator Eli D. Bebout, Select Federal Resource Management Committee
Representative Norine Kasperik, Select Federal Resource Management Committee
Senator Gerald E. Geis, Select Federal Resource Management Committee
Tim Wakefield, District Manager, BLM High Desert District
Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners
Gregory Cowan, Natural Resource Attorney, WCCA
Eric Bingham, Land Use Director, Sweetwater County
Kent Connelly, President, Coalition of Local Governments
Connie Brooks, Attorney, Coalition of Local Governments
David Allison, Consultant, Coalition of Local Governments
Mary Thoman, President, Sweetwater County Conservation District