

United States Senate

May 22, 2024

Chief Randy Moore
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Chief Moore,

I write to you today regarding the U.S. Forest Service's plan to create a "National Forest Plan Amendment to Conserve and Steward Old Growth Forests." On December 20, 2023, the U.S. Forest Service released a Notice of Intent¹ proposing to amend all land management plans for units of the National Forest System (128 plans in total) to include "consistent direction" on old-growth forest conditions. This notice initiated a scoping period on a preliminary proposed action and advises that the agency is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the effects of amending the 128 land management plans.

I have significant concerns with the current proposal to amend 128 land management plans through a single EIS, and specific concerns with a broad stroke amendment of the land management plans governing the eight national forests in Wyoming. This top-down approach undermines the State of Wyoming, our counties, and violates the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219).

The 2012 Planning Rule states, "The responsible official shall engage the public—including Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, individuals, and public and private organizations or entities—early and throughout the planning process." This old growth amendment proposal seemingly abandons U.S. Forest Service policy when it comes to public input, transparency, local knowledge, and the importance of locally-led decisions.

State and local government agencies in Wyoming have requested cooperating agency status and asked for more information on how they can engage as the EIS process moves forward. Responses from the U.S. Forest Service have lacked detail and have yet to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement. Additionally, you appeared before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on May 16, 2024, and failed to answer questions about whether Carbon and Johnson Counties would be granted cooperator agency status.

In the interest of protecting the interests of Wyoming, fulfilling my oversight responsibilities, and ensuring this administration is complying with its statutory authorities, we request the U.S. Forest Service provide written responses to the following questions before June 14, 2024:


1. How has the U.S. Forest Service engaged State and local governments in Wyoming in the development of the EIS?

¹ 88 FR 88042, December, 20, 2023

- a. Please provide my office with all documents and communications from December 20, 2023 to present between the U.S. Forest Service and State and local government officials in Wyoming.
2. Which State and local government agencies have been granted cooperating agency status in the development of the EIS?
3. Has the agency proposed a cooperating agency meeting? If yes, please provide the details of the meeting and initial notice sent to cooperating agencies.
4. Will cooperating agencies have the ability to give input on the development of the EIS?
5. Will cooperating agencies' information, data, and analysis relevant to the EIS be included in the EIS?
6. Does the agency believe that the existing land management plans in Wyoming do not adequately address old growth management and recruitment?
7. Wyoming has three national forests beginning their land management plan revisions. How will this process impact the revision processes already underway?
 - a. Please provide my office with the guidance and direction that has been provided to national forests undergoing plan revision.

Given expedited timeline and imminent release of the EIS, we appreciate your prompt attention and response to this matter. Please contact my office with any questions you may have regarding this request.

Sincerely,



John Barrasso, M.D.
U.S. Senator