

# SWEETWATER COUNTY

## FEDERAL LANDS AND RESOURCES PLAN



SWEETWATER COUNTY



### Approved by

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# **I SWEETWATER COUNTY FEDERAL LANDS AND RESOURCES PLAN**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Over 73 percent of the land within Sweetwater County is owned by the United States and managed by several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation. The State of Wyoming owns two sections per township or another seven percent. Due to the County's historical use of these lands and the accompanying resources, decisions made by federal land agencies directly impact County residents and the economy. With respect to "federal land management," the County continues to support "multiple-use" management practices, public-land resource use and development, and improved public and private access to and across public lands. The abundance and availability of natural resources within the region provide a variety of economic development opportunities including, but not limited to, mining and mineral production, gas, oil, trona, potash, lithium, and uranium development; timber production; agriculture and grazing; and tourism and outdoor recreation.

Sweetwater County is also unique because more than two million acres are in a checkerboard land ownership pattern consisting of alternating sections of private and public land. The Wyoming Checkerboard is about 50 miles wide and more than 150 miles long. Congress created the Checkerboard when it enacted a land grant to the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867 for construction of the railroad. The one-mile sections compel the BLM and the private landowner, now Sweetwater Royalties and Aggie Grazing LLC, to coordinate land uses and land rights.

Sweetwater County will continue to encourage the use and development of these resources and the related industries and businesses. The County also supports the development of additional natural resources as they are discovered and new technology is available. Sweetwater County depends on the use and development of natural resources for economic stability and these land uses are integral to the custom and culture of the County. Decisions affecting federal land resource use and development directly impact the County. In this regard, it is in the County's interest that federal and state resource management plans provide better access to federal land resources and allow resource exploration and development. In order to effectively articulate and protect their interests, the County will actively participate in all relevant public land and resource planning processes.

It is expected that the federal land agencies will follow the County policies in the Sweetwater Federal Land and Resources Plan (2022) in accordance with all applicable

federal and state laws. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) commits the BLM to revise its plans to be consistent with the County plan, so long as not contrary to federal law. The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) which governs planning for National Forest System land, including the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area and the Ashley National Forest, requires coordination with the County on all plans and management. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) also requires the federal agency to consider the project's consistency with the County plan in an environmental impact statement.

## 1.2 PLAN ORGANIZATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following plan was developed to document the County's policies for federal land management within the County. Relevant source information and maps are located in the Appendix to the Comprehensive Plan and a Glossary at the end of this Chapter explains the frequently used terms.

For this document to function as a valuable decision-making tool, it should be reviewed and amended as necessary to address new developments. It is anticipated that future County planning efforts will expand on the "values and objectives" identified in the County's General Plan. With respect to this purpose, County priorities and the issues facing the County will most likely change over time.

# LAND USE POLICY



*E. Wyant - South Hill Green River*

## 2 LAND USE POLICY

### 2.1 Overview

For the purposes of the Sweetwater County Federal Land and Resources Plan, “land use policy” refers to the designation, modification, and management of federal land for agricultural, environmental, industrial, recreational, residential, fish and wildlife habitat or any other purposes. This section of the County’s Federal Land and Resources Plan is intended to provide an overview of the County’s land use policies as they apply to federal land in the County. It does not address an exhaustive list of all possibilities.

### 2.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

2.2.1 Sweetwater County supports managing federal land for multiple use and sustained yield while recognizing that the public lands are to be managed for the primary multiple uses of domestic grazing, minerals, timber, wildlife, recreation, and rights of way.

2.2.2 Sweetwater County discourages and vigorously opposes federal land use restrictions or special designations that eliminate multiple uses and constrain economic growth and activity. The exception applies to federal land reserved for specific purposes, including the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, where the County supports the statutory withdrawal from mining and no oil and gas leasing.

2.2.3 Sweetwater County supports the sale or transfer of federal lands that are isolated, difficult to manage or where the sale will facilitate survey errors, as well as cases when disposal meets the important public objective of community expansion or economic development, or when the disposal would serve the public interest.

2.2.4 Sweetwater County strongly supports “no net loss of the private lands” within the County. No “net loss” shall be measured in acreage and in fair market value.

2.2.5 Sweetwater County should be consulted prior to any state or federal land acquisition or disposal actions, particularly when the acquisition will adversely affect the County tax base.

2.2.6 Sweetwater County supports agency action to make federal land available for lease or transfer under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act of 1954, as amended. The resource management plans should identify suitable lands and a process so a qualified entity can submit an application.

2.2.7 Sweetwater County is committed to coordination and communication with the various federal, state, tribal, and local land management authorities to ensure that the County policies are reflected in federal land management.

2.2.8 Sweetwater County will oppose federal land management policies and standards that interfere with the property rights of any private landowner to enjoy and engage in uses, activities, and access to and on an individual's private property consistent with controlling County zoning.

2.2.9 Sweetwater County believes that the BLM and U.S. Forest Service planning documents should be consistent with the County plan to the maximum extent possible under federal law. Sweetwater County asks that the Forest Service and BLM plans incorporate the County's plan to meet the following policies:

- Achieve and maintain in perpetuity a high-level annual or regular periodic output of agricultural, mineral, water, fish, recreation, and wildlife, and various other resources from federal lands.
- Manage for the primary multiple uses of recreation, wildlife, mineral development, grazing, timber, and rights-of-way, on public lands.
- Support current transportation, mineral, and grazing privileges in the subject lands at the highest reasonably sustainable levels.
- Produce and maintain the desired vegetation as defined by the site capabilities for watersheds, timber, food, fiber, livestock forage, wildlife forage, and minerals that are necessary to meet present needs and future economic growth and community expansion in the County without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land.
- Meet the needs of wildlife, while balancing the respective forage needs of wildlife and domestic livestock.
- Protect against adverse effects to historic properties.
- Provide for the protection of existing water rights and the development of future water rights.

2.2.10 The County opposes the use of federal buffer zones beyond the scope and boundaries of the wilderness designations and wilderness study areas (WSAs). Lands should only be managed as wilderness when they have been designated by Congress.

The areas designated as wilderness study areas should be managed in accordance with FLPMA, so as to not impair wilderness characteristics while respecting valid existing rights. WSA's not recommended for wilderness should be released to the full range of multiple uses. See Appendix \*\*, County Letter on Wilderness Study Areas.

2.2.11 Sweetwater County believes that the objectives of special designations can be met by well-planned and managed development of natural resources. For this reason, special designations established in a plan need to be based on identified need and supported by verifiable scientific data available to the public. A special designation must show that protection cannot be provided by other means and that the area in question is truly unique compared to other area lands. The area classified shall be the smallest area necessary.

2.2.12 Sweetwater County believes that the BLM use of Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class I or II rating, which is a method to protect visual resources, is not compatible with the County's policies, except for designated wilderness and WSAs. Other special cases may exist where such a rating is appropriate if thoroughly vetted by the County and limited to a unique site and is narrowly tailored to protect existing rights. Federal agencies should use mitigation screening, paint, and barriers to reconcile development rather than rely on broad visual classes.



# AGRICULTURE



### 3 AGRICULTURE

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW

The primary crops produced in Sweetwater County are alfalfa, hay, and mixed forage. (USDA NASS 2018). These crops were grown on 219 farms, which include ranches, in the county. The market value of crop sales in the County was slightly less than \$16.5 million in 2017, accounting for virtually all of the agricultural products sold. The Sweetwater County growing season averages 4.4 months or 135 days. Climate and Average Weather Year-Round at Rock Springs-Sweetwater County Airport.

Agricultural sales account for about \$773 million annually, the majority of which is hay and alfalfa. Food growers, processors, and other agriculture related businesses employ more than 66,000 people and contribute approximately 14 percent to the State's economy. Grocers are not included in these figures. (Wyoming Department of Agriculture 2021).

#### 3.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

3.2.1 The County recognizes that agriculture is an important component of the County economy, custom and culture. Sweetwater County therefore encourages the preservation of agriculture on federal land.

3.2.2 The County believes that agricultural land uses should remain a primary land use consistent with federal law designating grazing as a primary multiple use.

3.2.3 The County supports access and increased access to federal lands for agricultural development in a manner that 1) satisfies local needs and provides for economical and environmentally sound agricultural practices; and 2) is consistent with, and complementary to, the lifestyle, character, and economy of southwestern Wyoming.

## AIR QUALITY



## CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, GEOLOGICAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL





## 4 AIR QUALITY

### 4.1 OVERVIEW

“Air quality” is the degree to which the ambient air is pollution-free, measured by a number of indicators of pollution. Air pollutants are those substances present in ambient air that in certain concentrations negatively affect human health and welfare, animal and plant life, property, and the enjoyment of life or use of property. Ambient pollutant concentrations result from interaction between meteorology and pollutant emissions.

### 4.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

4.2.1 Sweetwater County supports maintaining and improving air quality impacts that arise from federal land management, including research regarding ozone and its precursors (volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrous oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>)) in the County. Air quality must also take into account non-area emission sources and the effects of wildfire smoke transported from other states.

4.2.2 Because the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in conjunction with Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regulate air emissions and performance standards, federal land managers have very limited authority to directly regulate air emissions.

## **5 CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, GEOLOGICAL, AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

### **5.1 OVERVIEW**

Cultural and historical resources are the physical evidence or place of past human activity, such as a site, an object, a landscape, or a structure. Archaeological sites, trails, and historic construction (such as buildings) are three of the most common types of cultural and historical resources.

Federal law will also protect sites, which have religious or traditional meaning to Native American groups, from destruction or loss.

The Wyoming State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) exercises authority under federal law to evaluate the impacts of any federal undertaking. There are civil and criminal penalties for violations and protection may require relocation of the proposed development site and, if that is not possible, then relocation of the artifacts.

### **5.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

5.2.1 Sweetwater County supports the preservation of significant cultural, historical, geological, and paleontological heritage of the County. The County recognizes that many sites and trail segments have lost their integrity and are no longer visible so they do not meet the criteria for protection.

5.2.2 The County concludes that the protection of cultural, historical, geological, and paleontological resources through federal land management decisions must also be tied to the integrity, quality, and significance of each individual resource.

5.2.3 Sweetwater County supports the mitigation of practical adverse effects to documented cultural, historical, and paleontological resources. Mitigation should include avoidance when possible, or excavation. The County would support retaining the artifacts in a local museum.

5.2.4 As a matter of policy, the County will participate in all undertakings and management decisions regarding cultural, historical, geological, and paleontological resources.

5.2.5 Sweetwater County supports the protection of historic sites and pioneer routes and the physical evidence of the settlement.

5.2.6 The County believes that private property rights or existing land uses, such as oil and gas exploration, mining, logging and harvesting of forest products, road access and maintenance, and grazing, must also be respected, especially if a site has already been altered and the resources are no longer visible.

5.2.7 Sweetwater County does not support broad landscape areas as cultural sites.

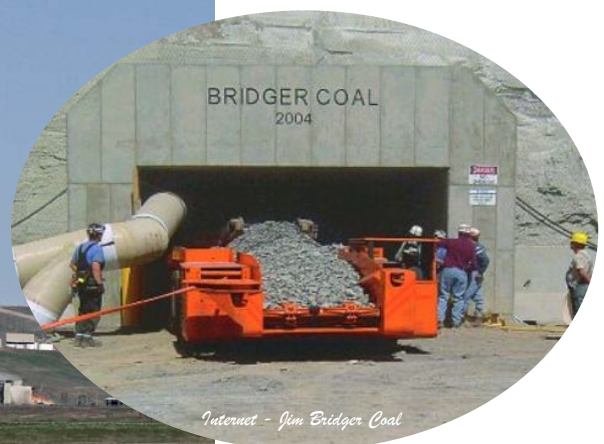
5.2.8 Visual Resource Management classifications should not be used to expand the scope of protection beyond the actual physical resource or sit.



# DITCHES, CANALS AND PIPELINES



# ENERGY



## **6 DITCHES, CANALS, AND PIPELINES**

### **6.1 OVERVIEW**

Ditches, canals, and pipelines are used to convey water from the source to the location where its beneficial use occurs. The term “conveyance” is used to describe the movement of water from source to application. Water pipelines are used to convey water when open channels are not desirable or suitable.

The regulatory system that authorizes rights-of-way across federal land for the transport of water applies equally to the transport of natural gas and oil.

### **6.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

6.2.1 The County supports access, and increased access to federal lands for canals and ditches and agricultural development in a manner that 1) satisfies local needs and provides for economical and environmentally sound water conveyance practices; and 2) is consistent with, and complementary to, the County lifestyle, culture, and economy.

6.2.2 The County also supports the grant of rights-of-way across federal land for ditches, canals, and pipelines necessary for water conveyance needs.

6.2.3 The County recognizes and will protect the existence of all legal canals, laterals, pipelines, or ditch rights-of-way.

## 7 ENERGY

### 7.1 OVERVIEW

In the context of this plan, “energy” refers to the renewable or nonrenewable resources used to obtain energy. Public and private utilities rely on Wyoming’s renewable and nonrenewable resources to fuel power plants (hydropower, natural gas, uranium, and coal) and generate and transport electricity. The Jim Bridger Power Plant consists of four coal-burning units that supply electrical power to western Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Oregon as part of the PacifiCorp subsidiary, Rocky Mountain Power, service area. Idaho Power has a minority interest in two units. Rocky Mountain Power owns the transmission lines and one of the two coal mines near the power plants, which supply fuel to the Jim Bridger units.

Sweetwater County has a long history of oil and natural gas production and continues to produce from existing fields and from new discoveries in deeper formations.

Sweetwater County also produces trona, potash, lithium, rare earth minerals, and uranium. Both coal and uranium commodities have suffered low price environment for the past 10 years but prices have begun to recover in the past year.

### 7.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

7.2.1 Sweetwater County recognizes the importance of the energy industry to the County economy. The energy industry also relies on well-servicing and transport services located in Sweetwater County.

7.2.2 The County also supports the mining of coal on federal land. Coal is mined near the Jim Bridger Power Plants from operations on both private and federal land. The future of the Sweetwater County coal production remains clouded by PacifiCorp policies to close all coal-fired power plants by 2037 and replace them with renewable energy. While retro-fitting the plants with carbon capture and utilization technology or natural gas remain remains an option, PacifiCorp has not fully committed. Recently PacifiCorp signed an agreement with Governor Gordon to convert the Jim Bridger units #1 and #2 to natural gas and to oppose the EPA rejection of reduced operations of Jim Bridger to comply with air quality standards in an amendment to the state implementation plan. Press Release Office of the Governor, Feb. 17, 2022.

7.2.3 Sweetwater County strongly supports SB152 a state law, which provides for the power company to sell coal-fired power plants to a buyer, if the company will otherwise retire or close the plant. The County also supports the additional authority granted to

the Wyoming Public Service Commission to administer the sale process as well as oversee integrated resource plans in which the power company announces its plans for electrical power, such as closure of coal-fired power plants, conversion to natural gas, renewable energy projects, and transmission line upgrades and construction. State law also supports incentives for carbon capture utilization and storage technology that will improve carbon emissions while using the CO<sub>2</sub> to enhance oil field production.

7.2.4 Sweetwater County also supports the uranium mine at the Lost Creek which uses in situ leaching.

7.2.5 The County's support for the mineral industries is based on the fact that employment directly related to energy produces earning at a rate almost twice that of other jobs in the state. The County economy reflects the energy industry long-term jobs.

#### 7.2.6 *Coal and Electricity*

7.2.6.1 Sweetwater County supports the continued operations of the Jim Bridger Power Plant to provide reliable and relatively low-cost electricity. The power plants and the related mines provide essential jobs and revenues to the County and federal energy and land management should facilitate the continued operation of the power plant.

7.2.6.2 The County supports conversion of coal-fired power plant units to natural gas so long as it assures the extended life of the Jim Bridger Power Plant, while keeping jobs in the County and meeting air quality standards.

7.2.6.3 The County supports the testing and investment in carbon capture, storage and utilization and hydrogen technology to bring the Jim Bridger units into compliance with air quality standards while allowing CO<sub>2</sub> generated to increase production in aging oil fields.

7.2.6.4 The County also supports the recovery of enhanced hydrogen that is a logical adjunct to current coal mining and provides a needed resource.

7.2.6.5 Sweetwater County will support new transmission lines that remain within the designated corridors and oppose transmission line routes that are modified to cross private lands to avoid federal lands.

7.2.6.6 Sweetwater County will support renewable energy so long as it conforms to the

County zoning. (See Sweetwater County Zoning Resolution Section 7 & 17) The County further recognizes that no source of electrical power has zero-environmental costs and that renewable energy has hidden costs in the form of lost wildlife habitat, avian and bat mortality, and significant inefficiencies due to limits on generation and storage.

#### *7.2.7 Oil and Gas Sector*

7.2.7.1 The County policy will require that federal land management plans and environmental impact statements demonstrate the following:

- That the authorized planning agency has considered and evaluated the mineral and energy potential in the planning area using the assumption that all areas are open to mineral development under standard lease terms unless federal law provides otherwise.
- That the federal agency disclosed the effect and increased cost of management prescriptions and proposed lease stipulations when measured against the area's baseline mineral and energy potential.
- That the development provisions do not unduly restrict access to public lands for energy exploration and development.
- That the federal agency documented the proposed closure of additional areas to mineral leasing and development or any increase of acres subject to no surface occupancy restrictions and that any closure was proposed as a withdrawal or management decision consistent with the Energy Policy Act and FLPMA.
- That the federal agency also considered the revocation of any moratorium, formal or informal, that may exist on the issuance of additional mining patents and suspension of new oil and gas leases.

7.2.7.2 Sweetwater County believes that federal lands should be available for oil and gas leasing and development with least restrictive stipulations needed to mitigate impacts to other public land resources and uses.

7.2.7.3 The County opposes unnecessary federal rules and standards associated with hydraulic fracturing and supports the revocation of all remaining direction for master leasing plans, which imposed an unnecessary planning step.

7.2.7.4 Sweetwater County supports the rights-of-way to transport crude oil, natural gas, and CO<sub>2</sub> for carbon capture, utilization and storage technology. Sweetwater County is also part of the national system of oil and natural gas pipelines that carry gas and oil to other parts of the country.

7.2.7.5 Sweetwater County opposes the cancellation or withdrawal of existing lease rights, and supports upholding existing lease rights, and the intent of the original lease terms without modification or cancellation.

7.2.7.6 The County supports an efficient process to secure waivers of lease stipulations based on site-specific information.

7.2.7.7 The County believes that mineral resource development should occur with science-based reclamation practices and responsible land stewardship. This includes steps to ensure reclamation success and the requirement to redo reclamation when it fails.

7.2.7.8 The County supports the concept of mitigation but will be involved in any initiative, mitigation or compensatory mitigation programs or studies.

7.2.7.9 Call upon the federal agencies who administer federal lands within Sweetwater County to:

- Fully cooperate and coordinate with the County to develop, amend, and implement land and resource management plans and to implement management decisions that are consistent with the purposes, goals, and policies described in this plan.
- The County also supports the recovery of enhanced hydrogen that is a logical adjunct to current coal mining and provides a needed resource.
- Expedite the processing, granting, and streamlining of mineral and energy. Leases and applications to drill, extract, and otherwise develop energy and mineral resources located within the County including oil, natural gas, oil shale, oil sands, lithium, rare earth minerals, gilsonite, phosphate, gold, uranium, copper, solar, and wind resources.
- Allow continued maintenance and increased development of roads, power lines, pipeline infrastructure, and other utilities necessary to achieve the goals, purposes, and policies described in this section.
- Refrain from any planning decisions and management actions that will



undermine, restrict, or diminish the goals, purposes, and policies for the County.

7.2.8 The County supports the enforcement of reclamation standards and rules to ensure that plugged and abandoned sites are successfully reclaimed in a timely and appropriate manner.

# WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT



## 8 FIRE MANAGEMENT

### 8.1 OVERVIEW

Wildfire management refers to the principles and actions to control, extinguish, use, or influence fire for the protection or enhancement of resources as it pertains to vegetation and wildlife habitat. It involves a multiple-objective approach, which uses wildfire response, ecosystem restoration, and community preparedness.

8.1.1 Sweetwater County finds that wildfires have socially and environmentally significant costs; the cost of fire suppression is only a fraction of the true, total costs associated with a wildfire event. Wildfire can spread quickly and overrun towns and homes at great individual cost to residents. Some of the costs associated with wildfire suppression, include the direct costs (resources lost and structures burned, etc), rehabilitation costs (post-fire floods and land restoration), indirect costs (lost sales and county taxes), and additional costs (loss of life and damage to water and air quality). (Western Forestry Leadership Coalition 2009).

8.1.2 The County also finds that the indirect and cumulative costs include deterioration in water and air quality, loss of wildlife habitat, loss of soils due to runoff and landslides following the fire, increase in non-native plant species that replace native vegetation, and direct mortality of fish, wildlife and birds. Extreme fires destroy the biological material in the soils, which makes reclamation and rehabilitation very difficult. These costs are difficult to quantify, because they continue several years and, even decades, after a fire. In many respects these costs are far greater than manpower, equipment and materials used to directly suppress wildfire.

### 8.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

8.2.1 Sweetwater County supports active and adaptive forest management to restore and improve forest health and to achieve multiple use and sustained yield with emphasis on employment, forest product production, open space, wildlife habitat, forage, recreation, and other social and economic benefits.

8.2.2 The County encourages management of forest resources on federal and state lands to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires, which cause unacceptable harm to resources and assets valued by society, including ecosystem and community health and resilience. The forested areas in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area and the Ashley National Forest, Bureau of Land Management and State Lands have suffered from disease and insect infestations for several decades. The resulting fuel

loads make the forests a high risk for wildfire with the resulting adverse impacts to municipal watersheds and other resources.

8.2.3 The County supports vegetation projects to reduce fuels and encourage native plant resilience elsewhere on the public lands which face similar risks of fuel loading and wildfire.

8.2.4 The County supports increased grazing (allotments, Animal Unit Months, or seasonal use) to reduce fine fuel loads.

8.2.5 Sweetwater County believes that federal agencies need to identify and treat fire hazards on all federal lands using stewardship projects, collaboratives, and other management tools.

8.2.6 The County supports opportunities to use and harvest forest products that have been affected by federal land wildfire or pests (e.g., beetle-killed timber or salvage sales).

8.2.7 Sweetwater County supports the timely processing and approval of projects associated with timber harvests under the National Environmental Policy Act so that the environmental and economic benefits can be maximized.

8.2.8 The County will participate in the planning for and revision of Forest Service forest management plans, State Forestry and BLM resource management plans affecting forest health and restoration.

8.2.9 Sweetwater County also encourages federal land managers to open appropriate areas for commercial timber harvest or stewardship projects.

8.2.10 Sweetwater County supports vegetation and wildfire treatments in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area and the Ashley National Forest to restore forest health and urges the Forest Service to include these goals in the land use plans. These treatments are essential to manage and restore the forest for future generations.

8.2.11 Sweetwater County supports restoration and stewardship projects and operations in the event of natural or man-made disasters. Access shall be allowed in order to perform restoration efforts.



## FISHERIES



*D. Domson - Flaming Gorge*



*T. Hlickson - Flaming Gorge Wyoming*



*T. Hlickson - Flaming Gorge Wyoming*

## FLOOD PLAINS AND RIVER TERRACES



*E. Wyant - Green River Biking Trails*



*E. Wyant - Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge*

## 9 FISHERIES

### 9.1 OVERVIEW

A fishery is an aquatic system that includes a target organism, a community of species on which that organism depends, the habitat in which they reside, and the humans that affect or utilize the resource within the ecosystem. In the context of this plan, “fisheries” are also the places where fish breed and live, or where people hunt for fish. The term also includes game and nongame fish species.

9.1.1 Sweetwater County finds that outdoor recreation is important to the County both as part of the local culture and economically. Statewide fishing represents a significant sector of Wyoming’s tourism economy. In Sweetwater County, the Flaming Gorge and Little Sandy reservoirs provide recreational fishing and boating while the streams provide habitat for Colorado cutthroat trout. Numerous rivers and streams also support sport fishing.

### 9.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

9.2.1 The County supports the maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of sport fishing opportunities on federal land.

9.2.2 Sweetwater County encourages the protection and preservation of water quality and fish habitat while balancing the needs of other water users, including those holding water rights.

9.2.3 The County supports the enhancement of public access across federal land for fishing opportunities.

9.2.4 Sweetwater County supports and encourages federal land management agencies to provide and maintain sufficient opportunities for fishing on federal lands through participation in planning efforts.

9.2.5 The County will continue coordination with federal land management agencies on water and fishery treatments.



## **10 FLOOD PLAINS AND RIVER TERRACES**

### **10.1 OVERVIEW**

River terraces are the bench or steppe areas that extend along river valleys. River terraces usually represent former levels and paths of floodplains of a stream or river. Rivers are dynamic systems. They can migrate laterally as a result of bank erosion and deposition, and move vertically as a result of bed accretion or degradation. Floodplains and terraces are formed during these channel migration processes. Therefore, floodplains and terraces are essential parts of the river system.

### **10.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

10.2.1 Sweetwater County supports the restoration and management of flood plain connectivity on federal lands for wildlife in areas outside human habitation while preserving the health and safety of residents.

10.2.2 The County supports Bureau of Reclamation and the Wyoming Division of Water Rights Dam Safety Programs that assess existing dam conditions to prevent dam failure or uncontrolled releases of water that are on federal land or will affect federal land.

10.2.3 The County supports access on and to navigable water bodies that are in interstate commerce by virtue of their direct connection to interstate river systems.

## **11 FOREST MANAGEMENT**

### **11.1 OVERVIEW**

Forest management consists of the principles and actions for the regeneration, use, restoration, and conservation of forests. Forests, woodlands, and urban forests add to the quality of life in Sweetwater County because of their ecological and recreational benefits. The Ashley National Forest in northern Utah and southern Wyoming as well as the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area provide watershed and water storage that serves much of the County. Other timbered areas throughout the County provide habitat and recreation opportunities.

### **11.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

11.2.1 Sweetwater County supports forest management plans that adopt effective management techniques to promote a stable forest economy and enhanced forest health, in accordance with the National Healthy Forest Initiative and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, as amended in 2014.

11.2.2 Sweetwater County shall be directly involved in the development and implementation of the Ashley National Forest Management Plan and the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area Plan, particularly in regard to the restoration of forest health for Forest Service-managed lands in Wyoming as well as the north slope of the Uinta Mountains.

11.2.3 The County supports active and adaptive forest management to improve and restore forest health and support multiple use and sustained yield with emphasis on employment, forest product production, open space, wildlife habitat, forage for domestic livestock and wildlife, recreation, increased water yields, and other social and economic benefits.

11.2.4 Sweetwater County believes that federal agencies must manage forest resources to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires, which cause unacceptable harm to resources and assets valued by society, including ecosystem and community health and resilience.

11.2.5 Sweetwater County urges the federal agencies to manage the forests to support the local forest product market at sustainable harvest levels.

11.2.6 The County supports forest watershed management to achieve optimal water yield without compromising other resources.

11.2.7 Sweetwater County supports opening appropriate areas on the National Forest System for commercial timber harvest and stewardship projects to facilitate commercial uses for timber and forest products affected by wildfire or pests.

11.2.8 Sweetwater County believes that management programs must provide opportunities for citizens to harvest forest products for personal needs, economic value, and forest health. Sound economic approaches, considering both long and short-term goals, shall be used when considering the harvesting of both wood and non-wood products, and appropriate social values shall be considered.

11.2.9 The County supports management programs that reduce fuel load and risks of wildfire to prevent catastrophic events and reduce fire potential at the residential or town interface.

11.2.10 Management and harvest programs should provide opportunities for local citizens and small businesses.

11.2.11 It is the County's policy to protect timber resources and promote the continuation of a sustainable wood products industry.

11.2.12 Because the Forest Service believes that the 2001 Inventoried Roadless Conservation Area rule prohibits vegetation and cutting timber in the areas, Sweetwater County calls for the revision of the Inventoried Roadless Areas in the Ashley National Forest and the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

# IRRIGATION



# LAND ACCESS



## 12 IRRIGATION

### 12.1 OVERVIEW

Irrigation is the practice of supplemental application of water to land beyond that directly received from precipitation. Irrigation expands agricultural output of cropland and sustains additional vegetation growth throughout the landscape.

Sweetwater County finds that irrigation is critical to the success of agriculture in the County. Small farms and most ranch operations use irrigation to grow crops and flood hay meadows for winter forage.

### 12.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

12.2.1 Sweetwater County encourages federal land managers to allow access and increase access to federal lands for irrigation development and maintenance in a manner that 1) satisfies local needs and provides for economical and environmentally sound agricultural and irrigation practices; 2) is consistent with, and complementary to, the Sweetwater County lifestyle, culture, and economy; and 3) respects the rights to develop and put water to beneficial use while crossing federal land.



## 13 LAND ACCESS

### 13.1 OVERVIEW

Land access refers to the ability to physically and legally access a given parcel of land. This typically has to do with roads, rights-of-way (ROWs) and property inholdings. Land access also concerns administrative restrictions on the methods or timing of land access, such as motorized and non-motorized access, and access that may be restricted at certain times.

Finally, access can also refer to crossing or visiting lands via trails or other non-motorized methods.

Common land access issues in Sweetwater County include the need to reach private land surrounded by federal lands, and public lands accessed by crossing private property. The Wyoming Checkerboard is made up of alternating one-mile sections of private and public lands. The pattern of land ownership in the Wyoming Checkerboard often leads to public access conflicts.

Historically, Wyoming courts held that the public can cross private land surface without a formal right-of-way to reach the public lands. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected the BLM effort to build roads at the section corners within the Checkerboard on the grounds BLM failed to show a necessity for the right-of-way.

Current lessees of the Wyoming Checkerboard allow the public to cross the private surface for non-commercial purposes but charge commercial users a right-of-way fee. In recent years, the BLM requires crossing permits to trail livestock over public land and proof of permission from private landowners.

Federal agency seasonal or policy closures can land lock the private lands. Similarly private landowners can close private roads.

13.2.1 Sweetwater County finds that the custom and culture and the economy are closely tied to accessing public lands for resource development and recreation. Physical access via roadways, especially for motorized vehicles, is necessary for the development and utilization of energy, mineral, recreation areas, or other resources. Of special concern are state inholdings managed by the State Board of Lands and Investments and private lands surrounded by land managed by the Forest Service or the BLM.

13.2.2 The County believes that access to and across federal lands is critical to

the use, management, and development of those lands and adjoining lands. Federal law also assures access to property across federal land.

13.2.3 The County recognizes that public roads have been developed by use and these roads are important to public access. These roads are not on the County Road Department maintenance schedule but the County retains the discretion to maintain these roads if and when necessary.

13.2.4 Sweetwater County will continue to assert and pursue the RS 2477 rights regarding the roads in Sweetwater County and federal agencies must recognize these access rights. (*See Glossary RS 2477*)

13.2.5 The County opposes the closure of roads, trails, rights-of-way, easements or other traditional access for the transportation of people, products, recreation, energy or livestock across federal land. Temporary or permanent closure or abandonment requires full consultation and coordination with the County.

13.2.6 County roads on federal lands shall remain open unless the County takes formal steps to close the road.

13.2.7 The County supports motorized access to all water related facilities such as dams, reservoirs, delivery systems, monitoring facilities, livestock water and handling facilities or other access needed for full enjoyment of property rights, and permits, must be provided.

13.2.8 Sweetwater County will support seasonal and wet weather closures so long as they are brief and defined by current weather and road conditions. These closures will not change the road's status as a public road.

13.2.9 The County does not support the closure of any more Forest Service roads. The County supports re-opening the closed Forest Service roads, especially those in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, which remain in use by the public to access camping and fishing sites.

13.2.10 The County maintains County infrastructure and encourages federal land managers to maintain or contribute towards the maintenance of infrastructure such as, structures, bridges, cattle guards, culverts, and similar facilities to be structurally sound and safe for use.

13.2.11 Sweetwater County supports revision of the Inventoried Roadless Areas or other "roadless areas" within or partially within the county and their future

management classifications.

13.2.12 Sweetwater County supports efforts by the State of Wyoming to petition the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Congress to correct the Inventoried Roadless Areas in the State.

13.2.13 Access to communication infrastructure for maintenance, repair and or upgrade shall be maintained and improved. State and Federal agencies shall not reduce or restrict access to communication infrastructure.

13.2.14 The County supports access to federal lands for all users including the elderly and the physically impaired.

# LAW ENFORCEMENT



## 14 LAW ENFORCEMENT

### 14.1 OVERVIEW

Law enforcement refers to the designated personnel group, who has federal, state, or local authority within a jurisdiction to enforce the law or respond to an emergency. Law enforcement is concerned with the specific, and sometimes overlapping, jurisdictions of law enforcement, response personnel, and emergency management across Sweetwater County.

### 14.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

14.2.1 Sweetwater County finds that an appropriate level of service for law enforcement on federal lands is essential for all levels of government to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the County.

14.2.2 Sweetwater County declares that the primary law enforcement will be under the jurisdiction of the County Sheriff.

14.2.3 The County supports the coordination of law enforcement (civil, wildlife resources, recreation, and public use regulations) among the County, cities, WGFD, BLM, Forest Service, Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refugee, Bureau of Reclamation and the State Parks.

14.2.4 Sweetwater County believes that the federal agencies should notify the County Sheriff's Office immediately when there is a life-threatening situation, criminal act, project structure failure, resource contamination, natural phenomenon (landslides and fire), cultural resource site(s) disturbance, and/or discovery of human remains.

14.2.5 The County Sheriff, in regard to state statute and emergency response, supports law enforcement agreements with Federal land agencies and any appropriate federal funding.

14.2.6 Forest Service and BLM use of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams and other law enforcement are armed in the course of their duties should be coordinated with the Sheriff and limited to federal criminal matters, rather than enforcing Wyoming State Statutes, rules or ordinances.



## 15 DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK AND GRAZING

### 15.1 OVERVIEW

“Livestock” are domesticated animals raised in an agricultural setting to create food, fiber, labor, or other products. “Grazing” refers to a method of feeding whereby domestic livestock consumes plant material and then converts it into meat, milk and other products. Federal lands play an essential role in the production of livestock in Sweetwater County.

### 15.2 RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

### 15.3 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

15.3.1 Sweetwater County supports the continuation of cattle and sheep grazing on BLM and U.S. Forest Service lands at historic levels and historic seasons of use unless the permittee requests the change.

15.3.2 The County supports the 2004 Report and Recommendations of the State-wide Bighorn/Domestic Sheep Interaction Working Group Cooperate to address the transmission of disease from domestic sheep to bighorn sheep as authorized in Wyo.Stat. 11-19-604..

15.3.3 Sweetwater County supports maintaining or increasing forage allocation for livestock grazing and supports monitoring to document range conditions and causation for any changes. The County also supports restoration of suspended use when resource conditions conform to rangeland standards or when appropriate or needed.

15.3.4 The County recognizes the value and encourages the BLM to use temporary nonrenewable permits when otherwise vacant allotments would not be grazed.

15.3.5 The County opposes decrease in livestock grazing permits and grazing allocations below present levels without considering the impacts of fire and drought and without at least five years of monitoring data.

15.3.6 The County opposes the retirement of any grazing units through purchase or conversion of permits or extended conservation nonuse that keeps an allotment out of livestock grazing in violation of federal law that limits a permit to domestic livestock grazing.

15.3.7 Federal land agencies should properly coordinate, consult, and cooperate with permit-holders and the County in making changes to grazing management in permits or grazing plans.

15.3.8 Sweetwater County supports efforts to manage non-native nuisance vegetation, flora and fauna species, vegetation that are detrimental to federal rangelands.

15.3.9 The County supports the use of monitoring in the adoption of allotment management or other grazing plans. As part of the planning, the County encourages third-party data collection for grazing plans so long as they meet established protocols. The Wyoming Department of Agriculture should be involved in the monitoring of allotments and resolving disputes.

15.3.10 The County also supports the use of mediation to resolve grazing management conflicts, whether it is pursuant to the Agriculture Credit Act for grazing on National Forest System land or coordinated resource management under Public Rangelands Improvement Act.

15.3.11 The County opposes the reduction, relinquishment, or retirement of grazing animal unit months (AUMs) in favor of conservation, wildlife, and other uses.

15.3.12 The County expects the WGFD to participate in managing forage and grazing allotments in relation to wildlife populations to ensure rangelands continue to make progress toward or meet rangeland health standards and other vegetation objectives.

15.3.13 The County believes that wildlife populations should not be increased nor should new species be introduced until forage allocations have been updated and an impact analysis has been completed for the effects on other wildlife species and livestock.

15.3.14 The County opposes reductions in forage allocation based on forage studies, drought, or other natural disasters unless shared proportionately by wildlife, livestock, and other uses. Increases in forage allocation resulting from improved range conditions should be shared proportionally by wildlife, livestock, and other uses.

15.3.15 The County believes that wildlife target levels and/or populations must not exceed the forage assigned in the resource management plan forage allocations and forage allocations should be revised as appropriate using recent forage data.

15.3.16 The County believes that land management plans, programs, and

initiatives should provide the amount of domestic livestock forage, expressed in AUMs, for permitted, active use as well as the wildlife forage included in that amount, be no less than the maximum number of AUMs sustainable by range conditions in grazing allotments and districts, based on an on-the-ground and scientific analysis.

15.3.17 The County recognizes grazing permits on federal lands are assets, which may be transferred by the permit owner. Such transactions must be processed by the land management agency promptly after proper notification. Any reduction in the size of the permit or forage allocation as a result of the transaction shall not be made without a specific scientific justification, consultation with the County, and monitoring data.

15.3.18 When grazing permits are revoked, in part or in whole, based on livestock operator grazing violations, the permit should be made available for continued livestock use as soon as possible.

15.3.19 The County finds that motorized access to public rangeland is vital to the permit holders and the land management agency for planning, management, and development. Motorized access should be maintained as open and improved as management needs require. Valid existing rights should be maintained.

15.3.20 The County believes that grazing in wilderness or wilderness study areas should continue and all management activities should be permitted consistent with the guidance adopted by Congress in the Wilderness Act for livestock grazing and Congress direction that the exception be construed to facilitate grazing.

15.3.21 Grazing uses shall not be diminished or impaired in any area designated as a special management area, Areas Critical Environmental Concern or inventoried road-less conservation area.

## MINING & MINERAL RESOURCES



## NON-NATIVE PLANTS & NOXIOUS WEEDS



## RECREATION & TOURISM



## 16 MINING AND MINERAL RESOURCES

### 16.1 OVERVIEW

In the context of this Plan, “mining” is the process or industry of extracting minerals or other geological materials and “mineral resources” are the natural resources in the form of minerals (solid inorganic substances). Mineral development (mining) is regulated and managed depending on the extracted resource, and are grouped into three categories: locatable, leasable, and saleable.

Mineral resources includes oil and natural gas development, which is also discussed in Section 7, Energy at 8.8.

### 16.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

16.2.1 Sweetwater County finds that mineral resources play a major role in the County’s economy. The federal land management agencies control the majority of these minerals, so federal land management directly affects projects, jobs, and revenues at the State and County level.

16.2.2 The County supports preservation of access, and increased access to public lands for mining and mineral resource development in a manner that 1) satisfies local and national needs and provides for economical and environmentally sound exploration, extraction, and reclamation practices; and 2) is consistent with, and complementary to, the County’s lifestyle, character, and economy.

16.2.3 Sweetwater County believes that mining and mineral resource exploration and development are consistent with the multiple use philosophy for management of public lands. These activities constitute a temporary use of the land that will not impair its use for other purposes in the future. All mineral resource exploration and development shall comply with appropriate laws and regulations.

16.2.4 The County believes that all public land should be open to leasing and other access with reasonable stipulations and conditions, including mitigation, reclamation, and bonding measures where necessary, that will protect the lands against unnecessary and undue degradation.

16.2.5 The County supports federal agency verification of reclamation success and delay in releasing any reclamation bonds until reclamation is established. Several land use plan amendments, including the Wyoming Sage Grouse Plans impose a 5% surface disturbance cap and reclamation failures can greatly impede future land uses



and mineral development opportunities. The County, if appropriate, will consider additional bond requirements.

16.2.6        The County believes that federal agencies should review and revoke lease restrictions for public land leases that are no longer necessary or effective.

16.2.7        Sweetwater County opposes any moratorium on issuing qualified mining patent applications and any barriers that may exist against developing unpatented mining claims and filing for new claims.

16.2.8        Sweetwater County objects to indefinite withdrawals of land from mineral exploration and development and, if withdrawals are determined to be necessary, then the withdrawal should be limited to the smallest area and shortest duration. BLM's use of indefinite withdrawals which predated enactment of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), must be reviewed for need and renewed under FLPMA withdrawal procedures.

16.2.9        The County supports the development of mining and mineral resources that minimizes adverse impacts to water quality in accordance with local, state, and federal standards.

16.2.10       Sweetwater County believes that federal agencies need to timely process all mining permits and applications.

## 17 NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS AND NOXIOUS WEEDS

### 17.1 OVERVIEW

Noxious weeds and invasive non-native species are plants that are considered harmful to agricultural or horticultural crops, natural habitats, ecosystems, humans or livestock. Often times they are non-native species, which spread rapidly due to habitat disruption or poor land management. Even native plant species can be invasive. These nonnative or invasive species spread rapidly at the expense of native vegetation. Noxious weeds have significant economic and environmental adverse impacts on rangeland health, productivity, the risk of increased wildfire, and direct control costs such as weed removal, crop and seed contamination, and equipment cleaning costs.

### 17.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

17.2.1 Sweetwater County finds that “The invasion of non-native plant species not only produces various ecological modifications, but also results in substantial socioeconomic impacts, particularly to the livestock industry and land management agencies responsible for fire suppression. Invasive plant species cause more economic loss on rangeland than all other pests combined. Invasive plants reduce the carrying capacity for livestock by lowering the forage yield and displace native plants to the detriment of wildlife habitat. Consequently, the costs of managing and producing livestock increase” (Utah State University 2009); see also Final Report Governor’s Invasive Species Initiative (October 2020).

17.2.2 Sweetwater County supports the reduction or elimination of noxious weed or invasive plant infestations and minimization of the establishment of new weed species using adaptive management and integrated weed management approaches.

17.2.3 The County urges the federal agencies to work cooperatively with other agencies and entities to reduce or eliminate noxious weed species and minimize or prevent the establishment of new infestations and new weed species.

## 18 PREDATOR CONTROL

### 18.1 OVERVIEW

Predator and prey populations require balance to avoid adverse impacts from either population. Predator control is primarily a function of the Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board and the county predatory control boards. Pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) delegated its authority to the State of Wyoming, through the Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board and in coordination with WGFD to control predatory animals. The local predatory control boards seek to resolve wildlife conflicts on public and private lands, which arise when (1) predators injure or kill livestock, (2) wildlife damages farm crops or raids livestock feed stocks, and (3) wildlife populations become problematic in residential areas.

Predator control is an additional tool to improve survival of sensitive species, such as Greater sage grouse chicks, and other wildlife.

### 18.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

18.2.1 Sweetwater County supports predator control on federal lands to predation by ravens, raptors, wolves, foxes and coyotes on Greater sage grouse chicks in the County.

18.2.2 Sweetwater County supports predator control to protect livestock and wildlife pursuant to the agreement delegating U.S. Department of Agriculture authority to the State of Wyoming. This agreement, which included the Forest Service and the BLM, has implemented the State Animal Damage Control Board jurisdiction over predator control supported by state funds and County fees allocated to the local predator control boards.

## 19 RECREATION AND TOURISM

### 19.1 OVERVIEW

Recreation is an activity done for enjoyment. Tourism is the social, cultural, and economic phenomenon of visiting places for pleasure. Outdoor recreation is a growing segment of Sweetwater County's economy. Tourism contributes to the County's economy through sales and room tax revenues. The federal lands in Sweetwater County provide a variety of recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors. Popular activities include camping, fishing, climbing, picnicking, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, horseback-riding, snowmobiling, hunting, and photography. The Flaming Gorge Reservoir provides fishing and boating. The many rivers and creeks throughout the County also provide fishing. Recreation is a primary multiple use of the public lands and a statutory purpose for the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.)

Sweetwater County is located halfway between Yellowstone and Canyonlands National Parks in southwest Wyoming. It is home to 10,500 square miles of pure, high desert adventure. Known as "Flaming Gorge Country," the area is characterized by the 91-square-mile Flaming Gorge Lake, the famed Green River, expansive deserts, and rugged mountains. Activities include camping, hiking, biking, fishing, golfing, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, hunting dinosaurs, shopping, and just plain getting away from it all. A perfect place to explore American history, Sweetwater County is also home to petroglyphs, pioneer trails and historical museums. The Flaming Gorge – Green River Basin Scenic Byway was designated as an All-American Road in 2021 by the National Scenic Byway Association. Scenic tours of the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area are also provided by the local tourism office. The county partnered with the tourism office in 2022 to develop a Sweetwater County Tourism Master plan. The plan includes four strategic focuses including local partner collaboration, outdoor recreation, attractions and amenities and travel industry infrastructure.

### 19.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

19.2.1 Sweetwater County supports outdoor recreation on federal land as part of a balanced plan of economic growth and quality of life and, consistent with recreation as one of the primary multiple uses of public lands.

19.2.2 Sweetwater County believes that federal land management agencies should achieve and maintain traditional access to outdoor recreational opportunities available on federal lands as follows:

- Hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, camping, rock hounding, OHV travel, biking, geological exploring, pioneering, recreational vehicle camping, and sightseeing are activities that are important to the traditions, customs, and character of the county and should be allowed to continue.
- Wildlife hunting, trapping, and fishing should continue at levels determined by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. Traditional levels of group camping, group day use, and other traditional forms of outdoor recreation, both motorized and non-motorized, should be allowed to continue.
- The broad spectrum of outdoor recreational activities available on federal lands should be available to citizens for whom a primitive, non-motorized, outdoor experience is not preferred, affordable, or physically achievable.

19.2.3           The County supports existing levels of motorized public access to traditional outdoor recreational designations in the County must be continued, including both snow machine and OHV use.

19.2.4           The County supports OHV loops to connect communities with the region. Open area riding as well as looped and stacked trail systems should be offered, with a variety of levels of trail difficulty.

19.2.5           Sweetwater County supports active management of conflicting recreational uses so that multiple users, e.g., motorized and nonmotorized user groups, are accommodated to the greatest extent practicable on federal lands.

19.2.6           The County believes that BLM or U.S. Forest Service and Wyoming State Parks must coordinate and consult closely with the County on any proposals for special recreation designations (Special Recreation Management Areas, wilderness, etc.) that may affect current and future recreation use.

19.2.7           The County supports recreation, tourism and associated businesses in the county, including the broad range of activities from off-road vehicle use to primitive outdoor recreation activities on federal lands. Sweetwater County will continue its role in outdoor recreation collaboration.



## 20 RIPARIAN AND WETLAND AREAS

### 20.1 OVERVIEW

Riparian areas are ecosystems that occur along watercourses or water bodies. They are distinct from the surrounding lands because of unique soil and vegetation characteristics that are strongly influenced by free or unbound water in the soil. Riparian ecosystems occupy the transitional area between the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Similar to wetlands, riparian areas provide benefits to the County, including wildlife habitat area, rangeland, hydrologic recharge areas, and water quality improvements.

A wetland is a land area that is saturated with water, permanently or seasonally, such that it takes on the characteristics of a distinct ecosystem. Wetlands provide numerous benefits including wildlife habitat, hydrologic recharge areas, and water quality enhancement.

The US Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA have legal jurisdiction over wetlands, including wetlands on private property. Jurisdictional or regulated wetlands do not include an area unless there is a clear nexus to a navigable water body, which is limited to flowing waters in interstate commerce. Thus, isolated ponds or waterholes are not regulated wetlands.

### 20.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

20.2.1 The County supports the maintenance and improvement of riparian areas and wetlands found on federal lands for the benefit of watershed, water quality, flood control, rangelands, and wildlife habitat.

20.2.2 The County opposes the broad definitions of wetlands that would encompass regulation of land on theory that it might once have been wetlands or that there is potential or that there is an indirect connection to interstate waters. Federal regulation is limited to interstate waters and isolated seeps or water holes should not be confused with wetlands.

20.2.3 Sweetwater County supports conservation and management of riparian areas through application of best management practices. See Wyoming Nonpoint Source Management Plan-Update (2013); Livestock/Wildlife Best Management Practice Manual-Update (2013).

20.2.4 The County supports the eradication of non-native and invasive species,

e.g., Phragmites, tamarisk, and Russian olive, which can degrade habitat value and reduce groundwater levels.

20.2.5 Sweetwater County supports upland water range improvements on federal lands to reduce pressure on riparian areas and provide upland water for livestock and wildlife.

20.2.6 The County supports data-driven application of rangeland health standards for riparian areas and incorporation of information quality act data when proposing riparian area management on federal lands. Track proposed changes and provide comments regarding federal regulations that affect wetland jurisdiction and permitting to avoid overreach by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

20.2.7 Sweetwater County opposes federal agency efforts to expand wetland jurisdiction and impose additional permitting requirements by EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

## 21 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

### 21.1 OVERVIEW

There are a number of special management designations to preserve or protect a particular resource that limit multiple uses. Only Congress can designate wilderness. The BLM authority to designate wilderness study areas on public lands expired in October 1992. The 1984 Wilderness Act for Wyoming released all Forest Service roadless area and review sites that were not designated for wilderness or future study and limited future review to the originally identified roadless areas. The Forest Service uses regulation to identify new roadless areas in each planning cycle.

The Forest Service used rulemaking to establish inventoried roadless conservation areas in January 2001. Isolated parcels in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area are classified as roadless, although the areas are less than 5,000 acres and have roads. Other areas in the Ashley National Forest were classified under the roadless rule.

The BLM also designates areas of critical environmental concern and special management or recreation sites through land use planning on public lands.

### 21.2 WILDERNESS

#### 21.2.1 OVERVIEW

Under the Wilderness Act of 1964, federal lands must be roadless and unaffected by man, with outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation, at 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition or ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, scenic, or historical value.

The BLM studied 13 Wilderness Study Areas in Sweetwater County totaling 247,000 acres. Appendix \*\*, BLM Rock Springs Field Office Seasonal & Year-round Public Land User Limitations (2019). These areas are managed so as to not impair wilderness character until Congress acts. BLM has no additional authority to designate new WSAs.

#### 21.2.2 *Objectives and Policies*

Because wilderness management prohibits motorized travel, logging, mining or drilling, and virtually all use of mechanical equipment, Sweetwater County believes

any wilderness designation should consider:

- Foregone mineral and energy development potential
- Logging and forest products
- Impacts to grazing management
- Private and state land inholdings
- Opportunity for land transfers
- Motorized recreational uses
- Water management
- Vegetation management
- Recreation, including biking and hand gliding
- Mechanized Equipment

21.2.2.1 Sweetwater County opposes the White House and Interior Department 30 x 30 Initiative to ensure each state meets a 30% conservation objective. Wyoming already exceeds that commitment with existing wilderness areas, and national parks. Appendix \*\*. Resolution of Sweetwater County on 30 x 30 Initiative (2021). Sweetwater County also meets this objective through the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, the 13 Wilderness Study Areas, and Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge. Other withdrawals and public land orders already limit mineral development.

21.2.2.2 The County does not support designation of additional areas within the County as federally designated wilderness. At least seven of the 13 wilderness study areas in the County were not recommended for wilderness and the roads in several areas should have disqualified the areas from the inventory and study.

21.2.2.3 The County does not support management of any additional federal lands within the county as non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, natural areas, inventoried road-less areas, or similarly intentioned management regimes.

21.2.2.4 The County supports removal of management provisions from federal lands that promote their management for wilderness characteristics and roadless

qualities over other uses consistent with the multiple-use and sustained-yield management standard.

21.2.2.5 The County's future support for any wilderness designation is conditioned upon the following:

- The State and County road systems and resolutions within the federal land management agency's planning area (National Forest, Bureau of Reclamation, or BLM land) are fully and completely incorporated into the plan provisions.
- State or local roads and rights-of-way are recognized and not impaired in any way by the recommendations.
- The possibility of future development of mineral resources by underground mining or oil and gas extraction by directional or horizontal drilling or other non-surface disturbing methods are not affected by the recommendations.
- The need for additional administrative or public roads necessary for the full utility of the various multiple uses, including recreation, mineral exploration and development, forest health activities, operation and maintenance of water facilities, and grazing operations on adjacent land, or on subject lands for grandfathered uses, are not impaired by the recommendations.
- The analysis compares the full benefit of multiple-use management to the recreational, forest health, and economic needs of the state and the County to the benefits of the requirements of wilderness management.

21.2.2.6 Sweetwater County believes that public lands that were determined to lack wilderness character during previous wilderness review completed in 1992 cannot be managed as if they were wilderness based on new or revised views of wilderness character because they were previously determined not to meet the requirements of the Wilderness Act.

21.2.2.7 The County would only support any proposed wilderness designations in the County forwarded to U.S. Congress for consideration if there is a collaborative process in which support for the wilderness designation is unanimous among federal, State, and local officials and the designation would release all other lands to multiple use and not result in any wilderness reserved water rights.

21.2.2.8 Sweetwater County believes that wilderness management must provide for continued and reasonable access to and development of valid, existing rights within



the area and provide for full use and enjoyment of these rights.

21.2.2.9 Sweetwater County opposes BLM inventories for the presence of wilderness characteristics unless done closely with State and local governments, and they should reflect a consensus among those governmental agencies about the existence of wilderness characteristics, as follows:

- BLM should, pursuant to its authority to inventory, identify and list all roads or routes identified as part of a local or state governmental transportation system, and consider those routes or roads as disqualifying the area as roadless.
- BLM should adjust the boundaries to exclude areas that do not meet the criteria of lacking roads, offering solitude, and offering primitive and unconfined recreation, and the boundaries should be redrawn to reflect an area that clearly meets the criteria above, and which does not employ minor adjustments to simply exclude small areas with human intrusions; specifically, the boundaries of a proposed geographic area containing lands with wilderness characteristics should not be drawn around roads, rights-of-way, and intrusions; and lands located between individual human impacts that do not meet the requirements for lands with wilderness characteristics should be excluded.

## 21.3 WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

### 21.3.1 Overview

Congress may designate certain free-flowing rivers as wild, scenic or recreational under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Any such designation is limited to free-flowing rivers that “possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values” and are subject to all valid rights including water rights. The Act requires federal land managers must inventory and study river or stream segments for suitability as a wild, scenic or recreation river.

The management of the recommended river segments prohibits structures for water diversion or dams. The designation also reserves a federal water right necessary to achieve the objectives and such right may constrain upstream water diversions and changes in beneficial use. The biggest cost is in the lost opportunity for future water structures and diversions.

### 21.3.2 Objectives and Policies

#### 21.3.2.1 The County recognizes the effects of Wild and Scenic River designation

are difficult to quantify unless the owners of the water rights are identified, the amount of water is quantified and there is a disclosure of the rights and structures that will be limited in the future. For instance, a rancher may own a water right on the stream but not use any structures for diversion, because the livestock drink directly from the stream. After designation, the rancher would not be allowed to build diversion structures. Federal land managers cannot manage public lands adjacent to water bodies based solely on an inventory as only Congress can designation wild, scenic or recreation rivers in Wyoming.

21.3.2.2 Sweetwater County objects to designating rivers as wild or scenic unless the State Engineer certifies there are no existing water rights are held on the stream segment and no upstream water rights holder will be limited in its use of water and no owner of water rights comes forward to object.

21.3.2.3 The County opposes designation if it would adversely affect the economic interests of the County, including enjoyment of private property rights, mineral extraction, timber harvest, agriculture, water rights, water storage, or water delivery.

21.3.2.4 The County believes that potential reservoir sites should be excluded from designation as wild and scenic rivers.

21.3.2.5 The County requires that any reserved water right created by the designation be junior to all absolute and conditional water rights existing before the special designation is finalized.

21.3.2.6 Sweetwater County recommends that unless the U.S. Congress acts on recommended wild and scenic river designations within five (5) years of federal agency recommendation, the river should be released.

## 21.4 AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

### 21.4.1 Overview

BLM has authority to identify areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC) as part of a plan revision. FLPMA defines ACEC as follows:

"areas of critical environmental concern" means areas within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes,

or to protect life and safety from natural hazards." 43 U.S.C. §1702(a); 43 C.F.R. §1601.1-5 (definitions).

The ACEC classification applies when other laws and rules will not protect or prevent irreparable damage to an important resource. An area must also be shown to be relevant and important. Importance pertains to whether the resource is found everywhere or is unique at a national or regional level.

#### 21.4.2 Objectives and Policies

21.4.2.1 The County opposes broad-scale ACEC classifications and supports a thorough re-evaluation of current ACECs and their management with a view to limiting management to a specific resource and a specific area.

21.4.2.2 The County believes that when big game and wildlife habitat is not regionally or nationally significant and can be readily managed through habitat designations in the plan, the area should not be designated an ACEC.

21.4.2.3 The County also concludes that unless BLM can show threat of irreparable injury, an area will not qualify for ACEC designation.

### 21.5 OTHER SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

#### 21.5.1 Overview

BLM planning policy provides for the identification of areas that merit special management. This can include recreation or wildlife habitat as examples.

#### 21.5.2 Objectives and Policies

21.5.2.1 Sweetwater County believes that special management areas can dilute the statutory direction that public lands be managed primarily for wildlife, recreation, mineral development, grazing and rights-of-way. This emphasis on particular multiple uses distinguishes public lands from the National Forest System multiple use directive.

21.5.2.2 County support for special management areas will depend on objective evidence that the area needs specific management not otherwise available under the plan in stipulations and management objectives.

21.5.2.3 The County will oppose special management area, which are de facto wilderness area nominations.

21.5.2.4 Sweetwater County supports special management areas to accommodate the primary multiple uses and do not result in de facto mineral withdrawals, rights-of-way closures or grazing reductions.

21.5.2.5 The area identified should be the smallest area necessary to achieve discrete management objectives.

# THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES





## 22 THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES

### 22.1 OVERVIEW

Species of plants, animals, and other living organisms which are, to some degree, threatened by extinction. Critically imperiled plant and animal species are federally listed according to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Under the ESA the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is responsible for conservation of terrestrial and freshwater aquatic species that are endangered or threatened with extinction due to loss of habitat, overutilization, disease, predation, inadequate protection, and other factors both human-made and natural. Sensitive species in Wyoming are not protected by the ESA, but the WGFD oversees identification and management. Once a species is federally listed, the state loses primacy for the management of that species. From state and local perspectives, federal designation of endangered species means less local control of land use issues, which might cause harm to the designated species.

### 22.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

22.2.1 Sweetwater County supports delisting species and designated critical habitats that were erroneously listed (e.g., listed based on incorrect data or assumptions) and/or that are no longer threatened and endangered species or sensitive based on criteria established by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

22.2.2 Sweetwater County opposes the reintroduction of large predators that are listed as threatened or endangered unless it is a nonessential experimental reintroduction without land use restrictions and there are measures in place to manage predation.

22.2.3 The County supports federal agencies accurate inventory of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species across all state, federal, and tribal lands.

22.2.4 Sweetwater County supports updating and modernizing the Endangered Species Act, as recommended by the Western Governors' Association, to improve the delisting process and limit misuse by special interest groups to influence land use decisions by submitting numerous petitions to list groups of species as threatened or endangered.

22.2.5 The County supports alternatives to listing under the ESA, including habitat conservation plans, management initiatives, or candidate conservation agreements to address threats to species and their habitats.

22.2.6 The County opposes actions to list any species as a threatened or endangered species or designation of critical habitat under the ESA or actions to add any species to the State of Wyoming's sensitive species list until verifiable scientific data have been available to the public that demonstrate the need for the designation; that protections cannot be provided by other methods, and that the area in question is truly unique compared to other area lands.

22.2.7 The County believes that recovery plans, reintroduction plans, guidelines, and protocols for species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA should be developed with full public disclosure and in coordination with private property owners and local governments that will be affected by the recovery plan. Recovery plans must contain indicators of effectiveness and recovery progression, identifiers of recovery completion, self-terminating provisions upon successful recovery, and management provisions after the plan is terminated.

22.2.8 The County believes that recovery plans for species listed as threatened or endangered should clearly identify the parties responsible for collecting data to monitor species recovery and how that data will be collected. Funding adequate to collect the data required to monitor progress toward recovery must be included in federal agencies budgets at the time of listing. When recovery plans are achieved then federal agencies should proceed to delist instead of changing the definition of recovery.

22.2.9 The County believes that the USFWS must disclose and discuss economic harm when designating critical habitat. USFWS shall involve local and county government representatives in their assessment of the economic impact of critical habitat designations in accordance with NEPA.

22.2.10 When developing recovery plans for species listed as threatened or endangered, Sweetwater County believes that it is not necessary or possible to restore a species to all habitats once occupied by the species to achieve a population that is not at risk of extinction. Recovery plans should establish objectives that restore and preserve only the amount of habitat and population size needed to protect the species from extinction.

22.2.11 Sweetwater County opposes designation of critical habitats for threatened and endangered species, unless habitat is actually occupied and proven to be necessary.

22.2.12 The County supports reintroductions only if limited to specific physical boundaries and scope.



# WATER QUALITY & HYDROLOGY



## 23 WATER QUALITY AND HYDROLOGY

### 23.1 OVERVIEW

In the context of this plan, “water quality” is the condition of water based on biological, chemical, and physical properties, and “hydrology” is the science of the distribution, effects, and properties of water. Water quality is highly affected by flow and timing (the poorest water quality usually occurs during periods of low flow). Maintaining high water quality standards has economic benefits because it requires less treatment for drinking. Good water quality can have positive cascading benefits to other resources such as recreation and tourism, wetlands, wildlife, fisheries, and agriculture. The County desires to maintain and/or improve watersheds and water quality to maintain public water supply and provide stable and productive riparian and aquatic ecosystems and groundwater resources on public lands. The County also desires to reduce pollutant loads entering waterways to improve water quality.

### 23.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

23.2.1 Sweetwater County supports managing federal lands and watersheds for optimal water yield.

23.2.2 The County supports ongoing water quality monitoring to establish baseline conditions to track potential surface and groundwater contamination that could result from changes in federal land use, e.g., oil and natural gas or mining.

23.2.3 When evaluating federal land actions, Sweetwater County supports Division of Water Quality standards and those mitigation strategies outlined for nonpoint and point sources.

23.2.4 The County supports the best available water resource data which also conforms to Information Quality Act criteria for federal land planning activities.

23.2.5 Sweetwater County supports protection of property rights associated with implementation of federal water development projects.

23.2.6 The County supports water development projects for livestock and wildlife outside of sensitive riparian, stream, and wetland areas.



## 24 WATER RIGHTS

### 24.1 OVERVIEW

Water is a renewable natural resource, available in finite supply, and subject to competition between stakeholders as annual supplies vary. The demand to supply water to Wyoming's interests is expected to be a continually complex issue for stakeholders to coordinate.

"Water rights" are the legal right to make use of water from a stream, lake, canal, impoundment, or groundwater. The County has a legitimate interest in seeing that all reasonable steps are taken to preserve, maintain, and enhance water resources for the public in accordance with the terms of the State's entry into the Union and federal law.

### 24.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

24.2.1 Sweetwater County supports State jurisdiction over water rights and opposes efforts to revise or reinterpret interstate compacts including but not limited to the Colorado River Compact and the Colorado River Basin Compact to decrease Wyoming's allocation of water.

24.2.2 Wyoming law defines a water right as the right to use water or put the water to beneficial use in accordance with the rules of the state. The preferred uses include drinking, municipal, steam production, industrial and irrigation. Wyo. Stat. §41-3-101)

24.2.3 The County supports water rights held by federal entities only if they are obtained through the State water appropriation process and will not infringe upon existing water rights.

24.2.4 The County supports locally-led watershed planning for each river basin.

24.2.5 The County opposes trans-basin diversions that will remove water from the County.



# WILD HORSES



## 25 WILD HORSES

### 25.1 OVERVIEW

Wild horse herds in designated wild horse herd management areas are protected from harassment but must be managed to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship in that area. The number deemed to meet the balance between wild horse numbers and other multiple uses is called the appropriate management level. Wild horses outside these areas are to be gathered and sold under the BLM Adopt-a-Horse program and wild horses above the determined level in the herd management areas must also be gathered.

For the past 50 years, the BLM has not been able to maintain the established appropriate management levels of wild horses within their unit boundaries due to lack of funding, program priorities, and litigation. Wild horse herd numbers increase at least 23% a year. Agency efforts to use fertility control have failed, in large part because BLM does not administer the booster shots annually and has only inoculated a small percent of the herd. In 2011, BLM estimated there were 42,000 wild horses on public lands. In 2022, BLM estimates there are 89,000 wild horses. This exponential growth rate overruns the resource with long lasting harm to vegetation, soils and wildlife habitat.

### 25.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

25.2.1 Sweetwater County concludes that the adverse resource impacts are measurable, especially in Sweetwater County's arid high-altitude land. In drought periods, County ranchers take voluntary non-use or cuts but wild horse numbers continue to increase and BLM gathers in 2021 did not achieve the lower end of appropriate management levels. Infrequent and incomplete wild horse gathers by BLM only add to the problem.

25.2.2 Sweetwater County finds that the Salt Wells, Divide Basin, and Adobe Town herd management areas overlap other critical wildlife and big game habitat, particularly the core sage grouse habitat areas. Wild horse herds directly conflict with these habitat designations and BLM needs to promptly address resolve the conflicts by reducing or removing wild horses.

25.2.3 The County relies on research by the University of Wyoming and Utah State University which find that feral wild horses adversely affect rangeland resources by how wild horses graze by cropping a year's growth, , the year-round use, exponential increase in numbers, and territorial nature.

25.2.4 The County recognizes that wild horse herd management areas and wild horses will also impair resources on private land and BLM cannot manage wild horses on private lands without consent.

25.2.5 Sweetwater County recognizes that the surface lessee in the Wyoming Checkerboard revoked its consent to retain wild horses on the private land surface in 2010. The revocation of consent makes it impossible to retain wild horses on the adjacent public land sections in the Checkerboard.

25.2.6 The County also finds that BLM must gather wild horses upon request of the private landowner. Competition for the scarce funding has meant that BLM does not honor the requests of the private landowners on the Checkerboard and elsewhere.

25.2.7 Sweetwater County supports revision or elimination of herd management areas to exclude Greater sage grouse priority or core habitat and revision of wild horse management numbers.

25.2.8 The County believes that the number of wild horses to be managed should also be reduced to take into account for Rangeland Health Standards and other big game and wildlife habitat management areas and management standards. A reduced number of wild horses will also protect rangeland resources from adverse impacts when BLM cannot promptly implement gathers.

25.2.9 The County recommends that BLM commit to annual or biennial gathers to maintain appropriate management level numbers and ensure wild horses do not leave herd management areas. Sweetwater County supports improved and legally defensible decision and environmental analysis documents to support the wild horse gathers. Better decision documents should deter legal challenges and the delays that arise from litigating each and every wild horse gather.

25.2.10 The County opposes establishment of new herd management areas, increasing the number of wild horses in herd management areas, or failing to remove the Checkerboard lands from herd management areas, absent private land owner consent due to the adverse impacts of wild horses and past record of non-management and mismanagement.

25.2.11 The County supports the plan for a wild horse viewing area which the City of Rock Springs proposed.



# WILDLIFE



*E. Wyant - Green River*



*B. Croanell - Snakehead National Wildlife  
Delian*



*M. Dornovich - Ramsey Ranch*



*E. Wyant - Highway 191 North*

## 26 WILDLIFE

### 26.1 OVERVIEW

Undomesticated animals usually living in a natural environment, including both game and nongame species. The County enjoys a diverse and abundant wildlife population, which contributes to a productive natural environment. Wildlife also yield important social and economic resources including recreation opportunities such as photography, wildlife observation, and hunting. Sweetwater County seeks to maintain healthy wildlife populations.

Fish found in intermittent and free-flowing creeks, rivers, and reservoirs are managed by WGFD. Some water bodies are stocked like Flaming Gorge or Big Sandy and other areas are not. Several streams support Colorado cutthroat trout, a sensitive species.

### 26.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

26.2.1 Sweetwater County supports the maintenance of big game including healthy populations of mule deer, elk, and antelope while minimizing negative impacts from winter migration, including vehicle collisions and residential and commercial vegetation damage.

26.2.2 The County supports management of the Greater Sage-grouse and its habitat in accordance with the 2012 Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Wyoming, as implemented by the State, with the map of the core habitat areas identified in the 2014 Governor's Executive Order, included in the appendix, and incorporated by reference.

26.2.3 Sweetwater County supports the conclusion of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department that livestock grazing has *de minimus* impacts on Greater Sage Grouse habitat and recommends the removal of the extensive restrictions and standards that govern livestock grazing in the 2015 BLM Amendments to the Resource Management Plans.

26.2.4 The County supports mitigating the loss or fragmentation of habitats and disturbance during sensitive periods, while respecting other multiple uses and private property rights.

26.2.5 WGFD, federal land management agencies, and the County shall work together to manage and conserve big-game populations and their habitats, identify migration corridors, and seek to remove barriers along those corridors in a manner that



respects private property rights.

26.2.6 WGFD and USFWS should continue to find effective ways to mitigate and compensate landowners for damage caused by big game animals on private property.

26.2.7 The County does not support increases in wildlife populations or introduction of new species until forage and habitat allocations have been provided and an impact analysis that includes participation and concurrence by the county, wildlife management agencies, public land management agencies, and private landowners is completed for the effects on other wildlife species and livestock.

26.2.8 The County believes that reduction in forage allocation resulting from forage studies, drought, or other natural disasters will be shared proportionately by wildlife, livestock, and other uses.

26.2.9 The County supports increases in forage allocation resulting from improved range conditions if they are shared proportionally by wildlife, livestock, and other uses.

26.2.10 The County believes that wildlife populations need to be consistent with the forage assigned in the resource management plan forage allocations.

26.2.11 The County supports the protection of livestock, other private property, and habitat of wildlife species by controlling predator and wildlife numbers.

26.2.12 The County supports the efforts of the WGFD to maintain a healthy population of pronghorn, mule deer or elk in the area described above, provided that the rights of farmers, ranchers, and mineral owners are protected.

26.2.13 The County would define all feral horses found roaming on public lands in the County are either in trespass or violate the terms of federal land use plans and shall be removed.

26.2.14 Sweetwater County believes that all federal or state wildlife management agencies shall coordinate with the county before establishing regulatory measures associated with wildlife that could impact energy development.

26.2.15 Sweetwater County supports the State of Wyoming's Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse (WGFD 2012) and supports changes in the federal plans that brought the federal land management into alignment with the State of Wyoming plan for Greater sage grouse conservation. The changes reduced buffers around

leks for oil and gas development, deleted sage brush focal areas, removed the General Habitat category, and removed livestock grazing stubble height and monitoring standards, among other changes.

26.2.16 Sweetwater County supports the concept of migration corridors where their designation occurs after close coordination with the County, they are not de facto non-development areas, they do not exercise management authority over private or federal land, and the boundaries are not based on routes of single or outlier, pronghorn antelope, deer or elk.

## 27 GLOSSARY

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the federal Animal Damage Control Act to manage and limit damage from predators and pests.

ANIMAL UNIT MONTHS (AUM) is a unit of measurement representing the amount of forage necessary to sustain an animal for one month. It also represents the authorized grazing use for one animal for one month.

APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL (AML) is the number of wild horses to be maintained in a herd management area to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship in the area. The number of adult horses or burros are typically expressed as a range with an upper and lower limit and forage may be allocated for wild horses based on the AML upper limit.

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC) is a special management designation to protect public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards. The identification of a potential ACEC shall not, of itself, change or prevent change of the management or use of public lands.

ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST is a national forest that includes land in northeastern Utah and small parcels in southwestern Wyoming. The Ashley National Forest also administers the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP) refers to land use practices adopted by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality to reduce nonpoint water pollution, including reduction of soil erosion and road maintenance. Wyoming Nonpoint Source Management Plan-Update (2013); Livestock/Wildlife Best Management Practice Manual-Update (2013).

The term “BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES” also applies to the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service Oil and Gas Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development (“Gold Book”) (BLM, USFS 2013) a set of best practices applicable to oil and gas exploration and development to reduce environmental impacts.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM) is a bureau within the U.S. Department of the Interior delegated the authority to manage public lands and federal minerals.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION is a bureau within the U.S. Department of the Interior established pursuant to the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902 to build, fund, and administer water storage, irrigation, and water transportation facilities. ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA) enacted by Congress in 1972 provides for a system of identifying plant and animal species that are either threatened or endangered and a rulemaking process to list the species for protection and identification of critical habitat.

FEDERAL LAND POLICY AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1976 (FLPMA) proscribes management standards, land classifications and withdrawals, land use planning, grants of rights-of-way, management of livestock grazing, land sales and exchanges. Congress also provided for the repeal of hundreds of laws that authorized the disposal of public lands.

FLAMING GORGE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA was established as part of the Colorado River Storage Project, which authorized the Flaming Gorge Reservoir and management of adjacent land as a recreation area to be administered by the Forest Service.

HEALTHY FOREST INITIATIVE started as a series of actions to expedite high-priority fuel-reduction and forest restoration projects in our nation's forests and rangelands, including the December 2003 signing of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. The primary goal of these projects is to reduce the fire danger and return the National Forests and rangelands to a healthier state.

HEALTHY FOREST RESTORATION ACT, imposes statutory mandates that the Forest Service revise its management to restore diseased and infested forests.

HERD AREA The geographic area identified as having been used by a herd of wild horses or burros as its habitat in 1971.

HERD MANAGEMENT AREA (HMA) refers to areas designated pursuant to the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act as areas where wild horses would be retained and were areas occupied by wild horses in December 1971.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) enacted by Congress in 1969 to impose public analysis process that would evaluate major federal projects for their

environmental, social and economic impacts.

NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT (NFMA) enacted by Congress in 1976 adopted detailed timber harvest and reclamation standards and land use planning procedures for lands in the National Forest System, including National Forests, National Grasslands, and National Recreation Areas.

NITROUS OXIDE (NOX) is a precursor to ozone and is regulated under the Clean Air Act.

PREDATORY CONTROL BOARD administers animal damage control at the local levels under the authority of the State Animal Damage Management Board.

R.S. 2477 refers to roads that came into use or were built over public land before October 1976. In Wyoming, most public roads crossing public lands were declared by the County to be a public road by resolution or map or both.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE is under the U.S. Department of Agriculture and charged to manage units of the National Forest System.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE is a division of the U.S. Department of the Interior which administers national wildlife refuges, the Endangered Species Act, the Sykes Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, among other federal wildlife laws.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (VRM) is a system of inventory and classification of areas on public lands to protect scenic resources based on four classes defining acceptable visual changes to the landscape. Class I apply to designated wilderness and wilderness study areas where little to any change may occur. Class II restricts changes to those not evident. Class III permits changes in the basic elements (form, line, color, or texture) caused by land management activity but the changes should not dominate the landscape. Class IV areas permit changes in views of the landscape.

VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOC) are also precursors to ozone and are regulated under the Clean Air Act.

WILDERNESS ACT OF 1964 established a national wilderness system undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, that is protected and managed to preserve its

natural conditions and that (1) generally appears to have been affected mainly by the forces of nature, with human imprints substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least 5,000 acres or is large enough to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value. Congress has since designated 111,706,287 million acres, the majority or 57,764,399 acres are in Alaska.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS (WSAS) refers to areas identified pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) as being roadless, larger than 5000 acres and meeting the definition of wilderness found in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

WILD AND FREE-ROAMING HORSES AND BURROS ACT OF 1971 imposed protection on all feral horses and burros found on federal land. The law prohibits the removal and harassment of wild horses and burros and provides for their management and adoption.

WYOMING ANIMAL DAMAGE MANAGEMENT BOARD implements the state animal damage control and exercises this authority on federal land pursuant to an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Land Management.

WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE is the state agency charged with promoting agriculture and implementing the state laws that apply to agriculture practices.

WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY is the state agency charged to implement several environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT (WGFD) regulates and manages fish and wildlife within the state.

WYOMING'S CONSERVATION PLAN FOR GREATER SAGE-GROUSE (WGFD 2012) reflects the Governor's Executive Order and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department conservation plan for the Greater sage grouse.



WYOMING NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN-UPDATE (2013) limits and manages nonpoint sources of water pollution to protect water quality.

WYOMING STATE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) reviews federal undertakings that may affect archeological, historical, and cultural resources.

WYOMING STANDARDS FOR HEALTHY RANGELANDS were adopted pursuant to 43 C.F.R. Part

4180, to adopt and implement vegetation and rangeland standards for public lands. The federal rules require public land activities to conform to the standards so as to maintain, meet or make progress towards meeting these standards.

WYOMING WILDERNESS ACT OF 1984 marked the end of the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process in Wyoming by designating wilderness in the National Forests in Wyoming and releasing all of the other areas to multiple use management.

## **28. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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(2013).

## 29. RESOLUTION

### **RESOLUTION 22-06-CC-01** **PROPOSED LANGUAGE AMENDMENT TO** **ADOPT A SWEETWATER COUNTY FEDERAL LANDS AND RESOURCE PLAN**

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2022 the Sweetwater County Land Use Department advertised that a public hearing would be held on April 13, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. proposing a Language Amendment to adopt a Federal Lands and Resource Plan, and;

WHEREAS, the Sweetwater County Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on April 13, 2022 at which time public comments were requested and received, and,

WHEREAS, the Sweetwater County Planning and Zoning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend the attached language amendments entitled Certified Language Amendments to adopt a Sweetwater County Federal Lands and Resources Plan; Planning and Zoning Commission Certified Recommendation 22-04-PZ-01;

WHEREAS, the Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing in regards to this matter on April 19, 2022 and gave due consideration to the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as to all the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing, and voted 4-0 to sign and did sign a Notice of Intent to consider adoption of the language amendments to the Sweetwater County Zoning Resolution, and;

WHEREAS, this Notice of Intent called for public comments to be received by June 3, 2022 and that the Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners would consider adoption of this plan after a public hearing on June 7, 2022 notice of which was advertised on April 19, 2022;

NOW THEREFORE that the Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners ADOPTS the Language Amendment to adopt a Federal Lands and Resources Plan, which are attached hereto and entitled "Board of County Commissioners Resolution "2022-06-CC-01" and allows the Land Use Department to recognize section and subsection and to make minor administrative changes.


Dated this 7<sup>TH</sup> day of June, 2022.

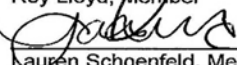


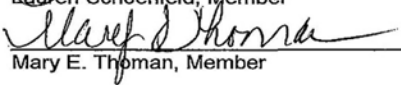
Attest:

Sweetwater County  
Board of County Commissioners

  
Jeffrey W. Smith, Chairman

  
Roy Lloyd, Member

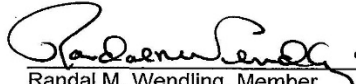
  
Lauren Schoenfeld, Member

  
Mary E. Thoman, Member

Federal Lands and Resource Plan  
Adopted June 7, 2022 by Resolution 22-06-CC-01

## 29. RESOLUTION

  
Cynthia L. Lane, County Clerk

  
Randal M. Wendling, Member



## 30. CERTIFICATION PAGE

### CERTIFICATION

#### ADOPTION OF FEDERAL LANDS AND RESOURCE PLAN SWEETWATER COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SWEETWATER COUNTY, WYOMING

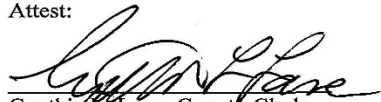
We hereby certify that Resolution 2022-06-CC-01 regarding a Language Amendment to adopt a Federal Lands and Resource Plan has been approved by the Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners in accordance with all applicable provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act, including:

1. At its regular meeting on June 7, 2022 the Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners announced its intent to adopt amendments to the Sweetwater County Zoning Resolution.
2. Prior to adoption, these rules were made available for public inspection, and more than 45 days have lapsed since the Sweetwater County Board of County Commissioners announced its intent to adopt said rules.
3. The amendments to the Sweetwater County Zoning Resolution shall become effective immediately upon filing with the Sweetwater County Clerk.


Dated this 7<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2022.

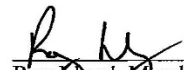


Attest:

  
Cynthia L. Lane, County Clerk

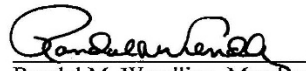
Sweetwater County  
Board of County Commissioners

  
Jeffrey W. Smith, Chairman

  
Roy Lloyd, Member

  
Lauren Schoenfeld, Member

  
Mary E. Thoman, Member

  
Randal M. Wendling, Member