

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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Dave Freudenthal *Governor*
John Etchepare *Director*

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

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In the absence of myself and the Deputy Director, Jason Fearneyhough, I hereby give full signatory authority to Karen Everett, Administrative Services Manager. Karen Everett is also authorized to sign any document requiring two signatures when either myself or Jason Fearneyhough are not available.

Signed this 25th day of November, 2008 by _____, Director

John Etchepare

BOARD MEMBERS

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Wyoming Department of Agriculture

2219 Carey Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002 ■ Phone: 307-777-7321 ■ Fax: 307-777-6593 ■ Cust. Serv. Hotline: 888-413-0114 ■ Website: wyagric.state.wy.us ■ Email: wda1@state.wy.us

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Dave Freudenthal, *Governor*
John Etchepare, *Director*

March 9, 2009

Financial Assistance Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program Comments
PO Box 2890, Room 5237-S
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Natural Resources Conservation Service:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the proposed interim rules on the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), 7 CFR Part 636.

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposal has major impacts upon our agriculture industry, our natural resources and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it is important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA supports the conservation, protection and restoration of America's farm and ranchlands. We believe the benefits to these programs are multifaceted for the private landowner, the wildlife utilizing these private lands and the public for their water quality, aesthetic values and open space.

We write in support of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in its efforts to improve WHIP, which has proven very successful in Wyoming on our farm and ranchlands. The Summary of Statutory Changes and Summary of Changes to the Regulations are minimal and we support the changes as proposed. We specifically support Section 2602(b) of the 2008 Act—Other Types of Wildlife Habitat. The example of pivot corners and utilizing these lands for wildlife habitat is very important to wildlife by providing vital cover for wildlife using the irrigated hay or crops for food. The clarification of the inclusion of these lands may prompt EQIP recipients to place the additional lands under WHIP.

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The WDA thanks the NRCS for receiving our comments. We look forward to reviewing the final rules and to the implementation of these programs onto farm and ranchlands across Wyoming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Etchepare".

John Etchepare
Director

JE/jw

Cc: Governor's Planning Office
WDA Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming NRCS State Office