

PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS AND RESPONSES LITTLE THUNDER CREEK DIVERSIONS

1. Wendell Funk, letter, April 24
2. Wyoming Department of Agriculture, letter, May 5
3. Thunder Basin Coal Co., letter, May 8
4. Wyoming Game and Fish, letter, May 11
5. Paul Stuart, letter, June 10 (Outside of the comment period)

Key Issues

Issues That Drive Development of an Alternative

1A. Why can't the dam be increased in height and a spillway feed into the existing Thundercloud diversion? Less time and expense.

Response: The existing diversion will be mined through and needs to be replaced and using the reservoir would impact use of the reservoir by the public.

1B. Map not clear on the connection. As much flow as possible bearing sediment should pass through a control structure but is 17.1A required?

Response: The control structure is existing, the 17.1 acres is to build a diversion structure to divert water from the Thundercloud diversion back to the sediment control structure.

Issues to be analyzed in the Analysis

1C. Why should the water quality in Little Thunder Creek be allowed any degradation by MA 8.4 Standards?

Response: Impacts to water quality will be analyzed in the EA and the deciding officer will determine if these impacts outweigh the benefits of the proposed project.

1G. Why should environmental concerns be subservient to economic ones?

Response: In the NEPA process we will analyze environmental impacts and use design criteria to protect other resources. Impacts and benefits to all resources, including economics will be analyzed in the EA and the deciding officer will determine whether or not the proposed action or some alternative to the proposed action is in the public benefit.

2A. Analyze the effects on livestock (paragraph 4).

Response: Impacts to permitted livestock grazing will be analyzed in the EA.

2B. We are concerned with impact on water for grazing and other agriculture production above, at and below the dike and diversion. We believe Thunder Basin Coal Company need to test and monitor the water running through the sedimentation reservoir above, at and below the reservoir throughout the life of this project.

Response: Impacts to water quality will be analyzed in the EA.

2C. Individual and cumulative impacts and the proposed remedies need to be thoroughly identified and evaluated.

Response: Individual and cumulative impacts will be analyzed in the EA.

2D. Timely and successful reclamation and mitigation should be required with consequences for failure.

Response: Reclamation and mitigation will be addressed in chapter 2 of the EA.

2E. Coal Co, BLM and FS should work closely with the grazing permittees through out this project.

Response: Potentially affected users that could be identified were contacted concerning this proposed project. If this project is implemented, coordination throughout the implementation stage will occur.

2F. Include a complete economic and social impact analysis, including impacts upon livestock grazing and agriculture production. Lose of environmental, historic and social values of livestock grazing and impacts to communities should be included.

Response: Impacts to the economic and social values including livestock grazing will be analyzed in the EA.

2G. Document the consequences of this project upon food and habitat for domestic animals.

Response: Impacts to livestock grazing and forage will be analyzed in the EA.

2I. Peer-review science should underlie decisions and the EA needs to identify the science which supports the decisions and discussions regarding this project.

Response: The EA will analyze the impacts of the project based on best available science.

3A. The need for the diversion is: the blocking dike is needed for flood control and protection for the miners. Explain the project and that it will have minimal impacts. No negative impacts on the general public. We urge the USFS to approve the SUP.

Response: The impacts and benefits associated with the project to resources and uses, including mining, will be analyzed in the EA.

4A. Project should be designed not to effect the fishery in Little Thunder Reservoir by decreasing water levels or allowing fish to easily escape from the reservoir.

Response: Impacts to the fishery in the Little Thunder Reservoir will be analyzed in the EA and minimized where possible.

4B. If water is released back into Little Thunder Creek, we recommend that releases be monitored to ensure that excessive erosion does not occur.

Response: Impacts to erosion on Little Thunder Creek will be analyzed and mitigated where possible.

5A. I insist on a sheep tight fence located on the west and north side of the diversion ditch extending into Section 22 (T43N, R71W) on the west side of Little thunder Reservoir. Need to keep livestock and wildlife from drifting into the diversion ditch or the reservoir during spring blizzards. I suggest placing of dirt windbreaks located on the west side of this fence above the reservoir.

Response: The situation with livestock drifting will be monitored and a fence may be constructed at a later date if needed.

Issues Outside the Scope

1D. Why mining is given carte blanche, grazing and recreation only mentioned?

Response: Outside the scope of this project. Uses that are allowed on the National Grassland and the allocations of lands made for these uses is decided in the Thunder Basin National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan. The balance of these in a specific area and impacts to a variety of uses and resources will be analyzed in the EA.

1E. Compare undisturbed landscape with what it will be in 2025. How is it more productive in 2025. Where is the justice in being rapacious today without regard for tomorrow?

Response: Outside the Scope of this project because development of an existing coal lease is a legal right and this project is needed to develop the lease.

1F. Is the nation's salient need for more energy today or for less waste and greater energy efficiency?

Response: Control of energy is outside the scope of this project. The issue of energy use and waste is of national scope.

2H. EA needs to include positive effects of livestock grazing upon the environment and as a tool to achieve environmental objectives and impacts of this project on limiting of livestock grazing to achieve these positive effects

Response: Outside the scope of this project. The EA will analyze the impacts of this project on other resources, including livestock grazing. Analysis of positive effects of livestock grazing will be analyzed as part of the development of Allotment management plans.