

---

**FINAL PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
FOR  
VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS AND HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM  
FOR WYOMING**

---



**United States Department of Agriculture  
Farm Service Agency**

**March 2012**

(This page intentionally left blank)

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

### **Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program State of Wyoming**

**March 2011**

#### **Introduction**

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in the State of Wyoming. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the State or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

The state of Wyoming, through the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds to expand its existing Private Lands Public Wildlife (PLPW) Access Program and potentially create a new access program to provide the public with more opportunities to hunt and fish on private lands. WGFD proposes to use Federal VPA-HIP funds to increase the total funds available for landowner payouts in the PLPW Access Program and increase the number of private landowners enrolled. WGFD would also use funds to hire four full-time contract employees to assist with administration and enrollment, and to lessen the land area that access coordinators currently have to cover.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase the total acres of private lands enrolled in public access programs. The need for the Proposed Action is to meet the demand from private landowners wishing enrollment, and to allow free public access to high quality private lands for hunting and fishing.

#### **Preferred Alternative**

WGFD proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds and supplemental funds, to expand participation in the PLPW Access Program, specifically Hunter Management Area, Walk-in Hunting Area, and Walk-in Fishing Area programs, that allow access to private lands for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related recreational opportunities over the next three years. Specifically, WGFD would:

- Increase available funding for landowner payouts to enroll more private landowners into one to three year contracts using current payout rates;
- Expand the number of regional access coordinators by using VPA-HIP funds to hire four full-time contract field access coordinators for three years;
- Reduce the land area the access coordinators have to cover by hiring up to four full-time contract employees and creating more regions within the state;
- Lease four, four-wheeled drive trucks for use by contract regional access coordinators;
- Produce maps of program areas within each new region for distribution to hunters and anglers;
- Purchase additional signage for marking enrolled property;

- Utilize additional staff to allow more frequent patrolling of enrolled properties during open seasons; and
- Increase advertising to better educate hunters and anglers about the program.

WGFD would utilize the VPA-HIP funds to make these administrative changes to the PLPW Access Program that would allow the Program's capacity to grow. No habitat improvements would be done utilizing VPA-HIP funds. WGFD has alternate funding sources that it uses for habitat improvements on PLPW enrolled lands. Payouts to enrolled landowners would follow the current WGFD payout schedule for enrolled lands.

### **Reasons for Finding of No Significant Impact**

In consideration of the analysis documented in the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations 1508.27, the preferred alternative would not constitute a major State or Federal action affecting the human and natural environment. Therefore, this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following:

1. Long-term beneficial impacts and short-term localized impacts would occur with the preferred alternative. Neither of these impacts would be considered significant.
2. The preferred alternative would not affect public health or safety.
3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area (cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas) would be preserved with implementation of the preferred alternative.
4. The potential impacts on the quality of the human environment are not considered highly controversial.
5. The potential impacts on the human environment as described in the PEA are not uncertain nor do they involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The preferred alternative would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. Cumulative impacts of the preferred alternative in combination with other recent, ongoing, or foreseeable future actions are not expected to be significant.
8. The preferred alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
9. The preferred alternative would have long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife and their habitats, including endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
10. The preferred alternative does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law imposed for the protection of the environment.

**Determination**

On the basis of the analysis and information contained in the PEA and FONSI, it is my determination that adoption of the preferred alternative does not constitute a major Federal action affecting the quality of the human and natural environment. Barring any new data identified during the public and agency review of the Final PEA that would dramatically change the analysis presented in the PEA or identification of a significant controversial issue, the PEA and this FONSI are considered Final 30 days after date of initial publication of the Notice of Availability.



**APPROVED:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

**March 28, 2012**

**Date**



## Cover Sheet

**Proposed Action:** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Wyoming have agreed to implement a new Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). USDA is provided the statutory authority by the provisions of the Food Security Act of 2008, and the Regulations at 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1410. VPA-HIP provides grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the state or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

**Type of Document:** Programmatic Environmental Assessment

**Lead Agency:** USDA, FSA

**Sponsoring Agency:** Wyoming Game and Fish Department

**Cooperating Agency:** None

**Comments:** This Programmatic Environmental Assessment was prepared in accordance with USDA FSA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementation procedures found in 7 CFR 799, as well as the NEPA of 1969, Public Law 91-190, 42 United States Code 4321-4347, 1 January 1970, as amended.

A Notice of Availability was released on April 16, 2012 announcing a 30-day comment period. A copy of the document can be found on the USDA FSA website: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov). Comments will be accepted until May 17, 2012. Comments may be submitted via e-mail to: michael.harrison@cardnotec.com

Or via mail to the following address:

Cardno TEC, Inc.  
c/o Michael Harrison  
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300  
Newport News, VA 23606

(This page intentionally left blank)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in Wyoming. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the state or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

### **Proposed Action**

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) proposes to use Federal VPA-HIP funds to increase the total funds available for landowner easements in the Private Lands Public Wildlife (PLPW) Access Program and increase the number of private landowners enrolled. Additionally, WGFD would hire four full-time contract employees to assist with administration and enrollment, thereby allowing WGFD to increase its presence throughout Wyoming.

### **Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase the total acres of private lands enrolled in public access programs. The need for the Proposed Action is to meet the demand from private landowners wishing enrollment, and to allow free public access to high quality private lands for hunting and fishing.

### **Environmental Consequences**

This Programmatic Environmental Assessment has been prepared to analyze the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) or the No Action Alternative. Under the Proposed Action, WGFD would utilize VPA-HIP funds to expand enrollment in the PLPW Access Program and hire four full-time contract employees to assist with enrollment and administration of the Program. No habitat improvement projects would occur under the Proposed Action. Under the No Action Alternative, the PLPW Access Program would continue as it is currently administered, and remain limited by funding available for landowner payouts and staffing requirements. The potential environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed Action would increase hunting and fishing recreational opportunities in Wyoming, as well as offer a slight economic benefit. A summary of environmental consequences is provided in Table ES-1.

**Table ES-1 Summary of Environmental Consequences**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)</b>	<b>No Action Alternative</b>
Biological Resources (Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife and Protected Species)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for new hunting or fishing pressure in areas that were not open to hunting prior to enrollment</li> <li>• Impacts to terrestrial wildlife, aquatic wildlife, and protected species would not be adverse as these populations are actively monitored and managed by WGFD for sustainable hunting and fishing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline conditions would persist, new enrollment in the PLPW Access Program would remain limited by funding</li> </ul>
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased recreational opportunities for licensed hunters and anglers to access high quality habitat on privately owned lands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline conditions would persist, with no increased opportunities for recreation</li> </ul>
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slight economic benefit to newly enrolled landowner from annual payout</li> <li>• Creation of four new full-time contract jobs would offer slight economic benefit, though temporary</li> <li>• Indirect economic benefits from purchase of goods and services for hunting and fishing activities</li> <li>• No environmental justice impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline conditions would persist, with no beneficial socioeconomic impacts</li> </ul>

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1

2 **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....ES-1**

3 **CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION .....1-5**

4     **1.1 BACKGROUND .....1-5**

5     **1.2 THE PROPOSED ACTION .....1-7**

6     **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION .....1-7**

7     **1.4 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE.....1-7**

8     **1.5 ORGANIZATION OF PEA .....1-7**

9 **CHAPTER 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.....2-1**

10     **2.1 PROPOSED ACTION .....2-1**

11     **2.2 ALTERNATIVES.....2-2**

12     **2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE .....2-2**

13     **2.4 RESOURCES ELIMINATED FROM ANALYSIS .....2-2**

14 **CHAPTER 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.....3-1**

15     **3.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES .....3-1**

16         **3.1.1 Affected Environment .....3-1**

17             3.1.1.1 Terrestrial Wildlife ..... 3-1

18             3.1.1.2 Aquatic Wildlife ..... 3-2

19             3.1.1.3 Protected Species..... 3-2

20         **3.1.2 Environmental Consequences.....3-2**

21             3.1.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)..... 3-2

22             3.1.2.2 No Action Alternative ..... 3-3

23     **3.2 RECREATION .....3-4**

24         **3.2.1 Affected Environment .....3-4**

25         **3.2.2 Environmental Consequences.....3-4**

26             3.2.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)..... 3-4

27             3.2.2.2 No Action Alternative ..... 3-4

28     **3.3 SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE .....3-5**

29         **3.3.1 Affected Environment .....3-5**

30             3.3.1.1 Population and Demographics..... 3-5

31             3.3.1.2 Employment, Income, and Public Access Programs ..... 3-6



1

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

2	CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
3	CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
4	EO	Executive Order
5	FMA	Fishing Management Area
6	FSA	Farm Service Agency
7	HMA	Hunting Management Area
8	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
9	PEA	Programmatic Environmental
10		Assessment
11	PLPW	Private Lands Public Wildlife
12	U.S.	United States
13	USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
14	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
15	USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
16	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
17	VPA-HIP	Voluntary Public Access and
18		Habitat Incentive Program
19	WGFD	Wyoming Game
20		and Fish Department
21	WIFA	Walk-in Fishing Area
22	WIHA	Walk-in Hunting Area

(This page intentionally left blank)

## 1 **CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION**

---

2 The United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) proposes to  
3 implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm  
4 Bill) in Wyoming. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides  
5 grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch,  
6 and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent  
7 recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife  
8 habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the state or tribal government that receives the  
9 grant funds.

10 The VPA-HIP is a competitive grants program that is only available for state and tribal governments. The  
11 grant funding may be used to expand existing public access programs or create new public access  
12 programs, or provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on enrolled lands. Program objectives are to:

- 13 • Maximize participation by landowners;
- 14 • Ensure that land enrolled in the program has appropriate wildlife habitat;
- 15 • Provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on Conservation Reserve Enhancement  
16 Program lands, if available;
- 17 • Supplement funding and services from other Federal, state, or tribal government or private  
18 resources; and
- 19 • Inform the public about the location of public access land.

20 The state of Wyoming, through the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), proposes to use  
21 VPA-HIP grant funds to expand its existing public access programs and potentially create a new access  
22 program to provide the public with more opportunities to hunt and fish on private lands.

### 23 **1.1 BACKGROUND**

24 Like many other states, Wyoming has experienced a decrease in hunting and fishing access on private  
25 lands. To help alleviate this loss of access, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission began the Private  
26 Lands Public Wildlife (PLPW) Initiative in 1998 (now called the PLPW Access Program). This program  
27 enrolled private landowners into one of two programs: the Walk-in Area or Hunter Management Area  
28 (HMA). These two programs provide free access for hunters and anglers to private and associated public  
29 lands. In return the landowners receive a monetary payout, increased law enforcement presence on the  
30 enrolled lands, limited liability for allowing access by State Statute, and WGFD management of the  
31 hunters and anglers. As of 2001, PLPW has become a permanent WGFD program and has been very  
32 successful. It began with 27,000 acres of private land enrolled in 1998 and has expanded to over 1.78  
33 million acres of enrolled private lands in 2010. The PLPW now consists of three separate access  
34 programs: HMA, Walk-in Hunting Area (WIHA), and Walk-In Fishing Area (WIFA). These programs  
35 provide free public access to private lands and are described below.

1 ***Hunter Management Areas.*** HMAs are parcels of land where WGFD facilitates management of hunters  
2 for access to hunt. These are generally larger parcels of land that can be made up of solely private land or  
3 a combination of private and otherwise inaccessible public lands. Under this program, hunter  
4 management is delegated to WGFD, and participating landowners receive a monetary payout based on the  
5 amount of land acres enrolled. Hunters wishing to hunt within the HMA must obtain a written permission  
6 slip that is issued by the WGFD.

7 To be eligible, the landowner must have 80 acres or more of land that provides quality habitat for wildlife.  
8 Interested landowners must contact a regional access coordinator to apply for the program. A local game  
9 warden or biologist determines if the land is suitable for inclusion in the program. If the area is approved,  
10 then the landowner and a WGFD representative sign an agreement. The boundaries of the property are  
11 also mutually agreed upon. The landowner and the WGFD representative decide the best way to mark  
12 parking areas and access points, and also determine any “ranch rules” that the landowner has requested.  
13 WGFD can also tailor hunter management to meet any concerns or needs of the individual landowner.

14 Once enrolled, the landowner receives an annual payment based on the amount of deeded acres enrolled.  
15 Payouts range from \$368 to \$1,890 for a one year agreement. Landowners that agree to multi-year  
16 enrollment also receive a bonus payment of 5% for every additional year.

17 ***Walk-In Hunting Areas.*** Like the HMA, WIHAs are areas where WGFD facilitates management of  
18 hunters for access to hunt. WIHAs tend to be smaller in size than HMAs, but size of the parcel does not  
19 determine whether the parcel qualifies as a WIHA or HMA, that decision is left up to the landowner and  
20 WGFD representative. WIHAs differ from HMAs in their requirement for access. WIHAs require no  
21 signed permission slips issued by WGFD. Instead, WIHAs are openly accessible to the public, as long as  
22 the hunter has a valid hunting license. Also, WIHAs are generally only accessible by foot, unless the  
23 landowner has designated trails for vehicle travel.

24 As with the HMA program, an interested landowner must contact a regional access coordinator and apply  
25 for the WIHA program. The landowner must have at least 80 acres of suitable land (40 acres if waterfowl  
26 hunting is available) to be eligible. The land to be enrolled is evaluated by a local game warden or  
27 biologist to ensure that there is suitable habitat for inclusion in the program. Once the land has been  
28 evaluated, the landowner and a WGFD representative sign an agreement, and also mutually agree on the  
29 boarder of the land enrolled.

30 Landowner payout is provided annually, just as with HMA. The payout rate is based on deeded acres  
31 enrolled and ranges from \$368 to \$1,890 for a one year agreement. Landowners that agree to multi-year  
32 enrollment receive 5% bonus for each additional year.

33 ***Walk-In Fishing Areas.*** WIFA is essentially the same program as WIHA, but for fishing access instead  
34 of hunting. As with WIHA, access is generally limited to foot traffic, unless a large tract of land is  
35 enrolled and the landowner designates trails for vehicle travel. As with WIHA, no WGFD permission  
36 slips are necessary for using the WIFA.

1 To be eligible, a landowner must have fishable ponds and/or running water. Qualifications for a WIFA  
2 parcel are based on size and quality. Areas to be enrolled are evaluated for suitable habitat quality, and if  
3 it exists, an agreement is signed by the landowner and a WGFD representative. Annual landowner  
4 payouts vary depending on pond acreage and/or stream miles enrolled in the WIFA. Payouts range from  
5 \$368 to \$1,680 for a one year enrollment. As with the other programs, a 5% bonus is added for each  
6 additional year for multi-year enrollment.

7 Landowners that have enrolled a parcel in one Walk-in program may enroll that same parcel for the other  
8 Walk-in program if suitable habitat exists on their land. The landowner would receive payouts for each  
9 program, but payout would still be based on amount of quality habitat enrolled. The same parcel of land  
10 cannot be enrolled in HMA and a WIHA program, as written permission is required for using an HMA.

## 11 **1.2 THE PROPOSED ACTION**

12 WGFD proposes to use Federal VPA-HIP funds to increase the total funds available for landowner  
13 payouts in the PLPW Access Program and increase the number of private landowners enrolled. If enough  
14 funding is available, WGFD would also develop a Fishing Management Area (FMA) program that would  
15 work like the HMA, but be directed for fishing activities on private lands. WGFD would also use funds to  
16 hire four full-time contract employees to assist with administration and enrollment, and to lessen the land  
17 area that access coordinators currently have to cover.

## 18 **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION**

19 The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase the total acres of private lands enrolled in public access  
20 programs. The need for the Proposed Action is to meet the demand from private landowners wishing  
21 enrollment, and to allow free public access to high quality private lands for hunting and fishing.

## 22 **1.4 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE**

23 This Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of the  
24 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq.);  
25 implementing regulations adopted by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal  
26 Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508); and FSA implementing regulations, Environmental Quality and Related  
27 Environmental Concerns – Compliance with NEPA (7 CFR 799). The intent of NEPA is to protect,  
28 restore, and enhance the natural and human environment through well-informed Federal decisions. A  
29 variety of laws, regulations, and Executive Orders (EOs) apply to actions undertaken by Federal agencies  
30 and form the basis of the analysis presented in this PEA.

## 31 **1.5 ORGANIZATION OF PEA**

32 This PEA assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative on  
33 potentially affected environmental and economic resources.

- 34 • **Chapter 1.0** provides background information relevant to the Proposed Action, and discusses  
35 its purpose and need.

- 1       • **Chapter 2.0** describes the Proposed Action and alternatives.
- 2       • **Chapter 3.0** describes the baseline conditions (i.e., the conditions against which potential
- 3       impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives are measured) for each of the potentially
- 4       affected resources and the potential environmental impacts to those resources.
- 5       • **Chapter 4.0** describes potential cumulative impacts and irreversible and irretrievable
- 6       resource commitments.
- 7       • **Chapter 5.0** discusses mitigation measures utilized to reduce or eliminate impacts to
- 8       protected resources.
- 9       • **Chapter 6.0** contains a list of the persons and agencies contacted during the preparation of
- 10      this document.
- 11      • **Chapter 7.0** contains references.
- 12      • **Chapter 8.0** lists the preparers of this document.
- 13      • **Appendix A** provides agency correspondence.

**CHAPTER 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

**2.1 PROPOSED ACTION**

WGFD proposes to use \$2,712,302 in VPA-HIP grant funds and supplemental funds, to expand participation in the PLPW Access Program, specifically HMA, WIHA, and WIFA, that allow access to private lands for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related recreational opportunities over the next three years. Specific program objectives include:

- Increase available funding for landowner easements to enroll more private landowners into one to three year contracts using current payout rates;
- Expand the number of regional access coordinators by using VPA-HIP funds to hire up to four full-time contract field access coordinators for three years;
- Reduce the land area the access coordinators have to cover by hiring up to four full-time contract employees and creating more regions within the state;
- Lease four, four-wheeled drive trucks for use by contract regional access coordinators;
- Produce maps of program areas within each new region for distribution to hunters and anglers;
- Purchase additional signage for marking enrolled property;
- Utilize additional staff to allow more frequent patrolling of enrolled properties during open seasons; and
- Increase advertising to better educate hunters and anglers about the program.

WGFD would utilize the VPA-HIP funds to make these administrative changes to the PLPW Access Program that would allow the Program’s capacity to grow. No habitat improvements would be done utilizing VPA-HIP funds. WGFD has alternate funding sources that it uses for habitat improvements on PLPW enrolled lands. The general funding breakdown is provided below, in Table 2.1-1

*Table 2.1-1. VPA-HIP Funding Breakdown*

PLPW Access Program Item	Per Year	Total Over 3-Year Funding Request
Landowner Easement Payments	\$600,000	\$1.8 M
Personnel	\$171,140	\$0.5 M
Advertisement/Printing	\$35,000	\$0.1 M
Other Administrative	\$100,000	\$0.3 M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$906,140</b>	<b>\$2.7 M</b>

If enough funding is available, WGFD would also create the FMA program modeled after the HMA program. The program would work like the HMA in that anglers would have to acquire permission slips provided by WGFD in order to fish in areas enrolled in FMA. Payouts to enrolled landowners would follow the same payout schedule as the WIFA program and would be based on the amount of quality fishing habitat enrolled in the program.

1    **2.2    ALTERNATIVES**

2    CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1502.14) require the lead agency to identify all reasonable alternatives for  
3    implementing a Proposed Action. The Federal Register notice announcing the rule for VPA-HIP (Vol.  
4    75(130), page 39135) explicitly states the purpose of VPA-HIP is to provide grants to state and tribal  
5    governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to  
6    voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation and to  
7    improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. Each VPA-HIP application received by USDA FSA  
8    underwent a selection screening process to identify those proposals that met the program objectives (listed  
9    in Introduction Section 1.0).

10   WGFD considered using VPA-HIP funds for habitat improvement activities for all existing public access  
11   programs. However, it was determined that a more efficient use of the funds was to increase total  
12   available funds for landowner easements, thereby increasing enrollment and public access. Hiring of  
13   contract full-time regional access coordinators would also allow WGFD to reach many more potential  
14   landowners.

15    **2.3    NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

16    Under the No Action Alternative, the VPA-HIP would not be implemented in Wyoming. PLPW Access  
17    Program would continue to be administered as it is currently, with landowner demand outreaching  
18    available funds for enrollment. As such, any increased public access opportunities for hunting, fishing, or  
19    wildlife viewing on private lands would not be realized.

20    **2.4    RESOURCES ELIMINATED FROM ANALYSIS**

21    CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1501.7) state that the lead agency shall identify and eliminate from detailed  
22    study the issues which are not important or which have been covered by prior environmental review,  
23    narrowing the discussion of these issues in the document to a brief presentation of why they would not  
24    have a dramatic effect on the human or natural environment.

25    The Proposed Action consists primarily of administrative type changes (i.e., more total funds for  
26    landowner payouts, hiring of additional staff, etc.). Thus, from a programmatic level, the Proposed Action  
27    would have little to no impact on the following resource areas:

28    ***Air Quality.*** The Proposed Action would have little impact to air quality in Wyoming. The Proposed  
29    Action is administrative in nature, and expanding participation in any of the public access programs  
30    would have no impact on air quality. Wyoming in general has good air quality, and only Sheridan County  
31    in northern Wyoming is considered to be in moderate *non-attainment* for the U.S. Environmental  
32    Protection Agency’s National Ambient Air Quality Standards for particulate matter greater than 10  
33    microns in diameter (USEPA 2012). It is unlikely that any aspect of the proposed action would have any  
34    measureable impact on air quality.

35    ***Noise.*** The Proposed Action would not create any new permanent sources of noise to the environment.  
36    Expanding public access to new lands may introduce gunfire noise on lands where public hunting may not

1 occur. This noise would be intermittent and occur during daylight hours during specified hunting seasons.  
2 In addition, the requisite size of land needed for safe hunting would reduce the potential for gunfire noise  
3 to be heard outside the property.

4 ***Human Health and Safety.*** No components of the Proposed Action would directly impact human health  
5 or safety. The goal of the Proposed Action is to increase public access to privately-held land that supports  
6 an abundance of wildlife, thereby allowing hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. While hunting does  
7 pose a slight safety risk, this activity would occur on private land designated for hunting. Wyoming  
8 hunting regulations require hunters to receive the appropriate education and meet minimum age  
9 requirements before a license can be issued.

10 ***Land Use.*** The Proposed Action would not result in any changes to land use designations. The Proposed  
11 Action would occur on private lands on a voluntary basis and would not require the alteration of land use.

12 ***Transportation.*** No aspect of the Proposed Action entails any alteration of the current transportation  
13 system in Wyoming. Increasing acreage available for enrollment in public access programs could cause  
14 an increase in the number of vehicles traveling to a newly enrolled area. However, it is highly unlikely  
15 this would be an impact to the transportation system.

16 ***Cultural Resources.*** The Proposed Action would not directly or indirectly impact any cultural resources,  
17 either architectural or archaeological. Areas that could be impacted under the Proposed Action are  
18 generally already under cultivation, had been under cultivation, or were in some way previously disturbed  
19 for farming, ranching, or other similar purposes. VPA-HIP funding stipulates that no structures may be  
20 impacted using the funding, this includes demolition of existing structures or construction of new  
21 structures. This also includes construction of roads. As such, it is highly unlikely that any cultural or  
22 traditional resources would be impacted under the Proposed Action.

23 ***Water Resources.*** Though the Proposed Action would potentially allow for an increase in fishing  
24 pressure, it is unlikely that water resources (surface water, groundwater, stormwater, or wetlands) would  
25 be adversely impacted. The Proposed Action is administrative, and fishing stocks are actively managed in  
26 Wyoming by WGFD. No habitat improvements would occur using VPA-HIP funds; therefore, there  
27 would be no direct environmental impact to water resources or water quality under the Proposed Action.

28 ***Coastal Zones.*** There are no coastal zones in Wyoming, as it is a land-locked state. Therefore there would  
29 be no impacts to Coastal Zones.

30 ***Other Formally Classified Lands.*** The Proposed Action can only be implemented on privately owned  
31 lands. The only formal classification applicable on private land would be Prime and Unique Farmland or  
32 Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Proposed Action would not include removing these lands from  
33 agricultural production. Therefore, there would be no impacts to any other formally classified lands.

(This page intentionally left blank)

## CHAPTER 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

---

---

This chapter provides a description of the existing environmental conditions that have the potential to be affected from implementation of the Proposed Action and the potential environmental impacts that may occur to those resources. Resource areas potentially impacted by the Proposed Action and covered in this PEA include:

- Biological Resources (Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife and Protected Species)
- Recreation
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

As described in Chapter 2, this PEA describes the potential impacts from implementing VPA-HIP funds in Wyoming on a programmatic level. Prior to any landowner enrollment, WGFD staff would conduct a site visit to determine habitat quality and land eligibility for public access programs. The site-specific analysis in combination with the programmatic level analysis provided in this PEA serves as the full NEPA documentation.

Environmental consequences to each resource area are described for the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative:

- **Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative):** utilize VPA-HIP funds to increase enrollment in the PLPW Access Program and hire four full-time contract employees to assist in expanded enrollment.
- **No Action Alternative:** continue the PLPW Access Program as it is currently administered. No funding for additional enrollment or the hiring of contract employees would occur.

### 3.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Biological resources are any living features of the natural environment that add to the intrinsic value of the local area. In this PEA, biological resources include terrestrial wildlife, aquatic wildlife, and protected species. Biological resources are included in this PEA because expanding the public access programs and increasing hunting and fishing opportunities may increase the potential for impacting game populations.

#### 3.1.1 Affected Environment

The Proposed Action covers the entirety of Wyoming. Terrestrial wildlife that could potentially be affected by hunting is described in Section 3.1.1.1, aquatic wildlife that could potentially be affected by fishing is described in Section 3.1.1.2, and protected species that could potentially be impacted are described in Section 3.1.1.3.

##### 3.1.1.1 Terrestrial Wildlife

Wyoming contains an abundance of wildlife found throughout the various habitats in the state. Big game species found in Wyoming include bison, elk, mule deer, white-tail deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, moose,

1 and mountain goat. Black bears and mountain lions are considered trophy game species in Wyoming.  
2 Grizzly bears are also considered a trophy game species in Wyoming; however, they are listed as  
3 threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Therefore, grizzly bear hunting is currently prohibited.  
4 Predatory animals that can be hunted in Wyoming include coyote, red fox, raccoon, porcupine, skunk,  
5 jackrabbit, and feral domestic cat. Small game and furbearer species that occur in Wyoming include  
6 cottontail rabbit, red squirrel, fox squirrel, snowshoe hare, mink, muskrat, weasel, bobcat, beaver, badger  
7 and marten. Migratory birds that can be hunted in Wyoming include mourning dove, sandhill cranes,  
8 Canada geese, snow geese, and all species of ducks. Upland game bird species that can be hunted include  
9 sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, blue grouse, ruffed grouse, chukar, Hungarian partridge, pheasant, Rio  
10 Grande turkey, and Merriam's turkey (WGFD 2011a).

#### 11 3.1.1.2 Aquatic Wildlife

12 The waters of Wyoming contain a wide variety of fish species that can be caught as sport fish. Cold-water  
13 fish species that can be caught in Wyoming include Bonneville cutthroat trout, Colorado River cutthroat  
14 trout, Snake River cutthroat trout, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, brown trout, brook trout, lake trout, tiger  
15 trout, splake, golden trout, rainbow trout, kokanee, mountain whitefish, grayling, and burbot. Cool-water  
16 fish species in Wyoming include walleye, sauger, yellow perch, tiger musky, northern pike, smallmouth  
17 bass, and freshwater drum. Warm-water fish species that can be caught in Wyoming include largemouth  
18 bass, channel catfish, black bullhead, stonecat, rock bass, black crappie, white crappie, bluegill, green  
19 sunfish, and pumpkinseed (WGFD 2011b).

#### 20 3.1.1.3 Protected Species

21 Wyoming contains numerous species that are protected by federal and/or state Endangered Species Acts.  
22 The only game species that are protected in Wyoming are migratory birds. Grizzly bears have been  
23 hunted previously in Wyoming; however, hunting of grizzly bears is currently not allowed because of  
24 their listing under the Endangered Species Act. The hunting of migratory birds is strictly controlled  
25 through licensing and bag limits, and is regulated by WGFD (WGFD 2011a). Wyoming contains one  
26 endangered fish species that is illegal to possess, the Kendall warm springs dace (USFWS 2012).

### 27 **3.1.2 Environmental Consequences**

28 Impacts to biological resources would be considered significant if activities resulted in reducing the  
29 wildlife or fisheries populations to a level of concern or incidental take of a protected species or its  
30 habitat.

#### 31 3.1.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

32 Under the Proposed Action, WGFD would use additional VPA-HIP funding to enroll more landowners  
33 into the PLPW Access Program, and to hire four full-time contract employees to assist with enrollment.  
34 No habitat improvement projects would take place under the Proposed Action. Increased hunting and  
35 fishing opportunities on private land where hunting and fishing were previously not lawful would occur.  
36 Programmatic-level impacts to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and protected species are described below.

1 *Terrestrial Wildlife*

2 Implementation of the Proposed Action would create the opportunity to enroll new lands into the PLPW  
3 Access Program. This could, in turn, lead to new hunting pressure on game species in an area that  
4 previously had no open access hunting or very limited hunting due to the land being private. This  
5 potential hunting pressure is unlikely to negatively impact game populations.

6 WGFD goes to great lengths to ensure hunting a game species does not negatively affect the status of the  
7 species. All game species are managed for the long-term viability of the populations. Prior to enrollment,  
8 a WGFD representative would survey the land to determine if the habitat is adequate to support game  
9 populations in enough abundance to allow hunting. Expanding participation in the current programs and  
10 increasing hunting opportunities would not result in adverse impacts to game species' populations given  
11 the existing WGFD control through the permit/licensing process.

12 *Aquatic Wildlife*

13 As with terrestrial wildlife, implementation of the Proposed Action would create the opportunity to enroll  
14 new lakes, ponds, or reaches of stream into the PLPW Access Program. This could create new fishing  
15 pressure within these areas that were previously not fished heavily because of being on private land. Even  
16 with new fishing pressure, it is unlikely that sport fish populations would be negatively impacted.

17 Again, as with terrestrial wildlife, prior to enrollment, a WGFD representative would survey the water  
18 body to be enrolled to ensure adequate habitat quality and that the populations of sport fish were high  
19 enough to support fishing pressure. Fish populations are monitored and controlled by permits and size  
20 limits on sport fish by WGFD. Therefore, expanding participation in the access programs and increasing  
21 fishing opportunities would not result in adverse impacts to fish populations.

22 *Protected Species*

23 Federal and state laws prohibit the killing of most protected species, so these species would not be  
24 impacted by the Proposed Action. The hunting of some migratory birds is allowed in the state; however, a  
25 limited issue license is required to hunt certain migratory birds. This allows WGFD to regulate the  
26 number of these birds that can be hunted in a given year. Since limits and regulations exist on the hunting  
27 of migratory bird species, Wyoming is in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and there  
28 would not be negative impact to protected species under the Proposed Action.

29 3.1.2.2 No Action Alternative

30 Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no use of VPA-HIP funds to increase enrollment in the  
31 PLPW Access Program. There would be limited expansion of PLPW related hunting and fishing  
32 opportunities on private lands in Wyoming; therefore, under the No Action Alternative there would be no  
33 impacts to biological resources. The PLPW Access Program would continue as it is currently  
34 administered.

1    **3.2    RECREATION**

2    Recreation includes those outdoor activities that take place away from the residence of the participant.  
3    Wyoming offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities to its residents. Recreational activities that  
4    are common in Wyoming include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, snowmobiling, ice  
5    climbing, boating, hiking, and biking. For this PEA, recreation focuses on hunting, fishing, and wildlife  
6    viewing opportunities available to the public in the state of Wyoming.

7    **3.2.1   Affected Environment**

8    Hunting is regulated by WGFD, and a valid hunting license is required to hunt within Wyoming. Hunters  
9    must also obtain a hunter safety card. Hunters must also purchase a Conservation Stamp unless they hold  
10   a daily fishing or pioneer hunting license. Separate hunting licenses are required for each type of big  
11   game. Migratory bird hunting in Wyoming requires a valid hunting permit, along with the purchase of a  
12   Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp (Duck Stamp) to hunt ducks, geese, and mergansers. Special  
13   permits are required to hunt certain game types in established areas including the Elk Feedground Special  
14   Management permit and the Pheasant Special Management Permit. Licenses and permits can be obtained  
15   online, through a WGFD office, or at local retail stores (WGFD 2011a).

16   Like hunting, fishing is also regulated by WGFD. To legally fish in Wyoming, anyone who is 14 years of  
17   age or older is required to purchase a fishing license. These licenses last for one day or one year for  
18   residents and nonresidents, and can be obtained online, through a WGFD office, or at local retail stores.  
19   License holders are also required to buy a Conservation Stamp, unless they hold a daily license (WGFD  
20   2011b).

21   **3.2.2   Environmental Consequences**

22   Impacts to recreation would be considered significant if they drastically reduced, increased, or removed  
23   available public lands designated for recreation or significantly degraded the quality of the recreation.  
24   Impacts to environmental conditions such as air, water, or biological resources within or near public  
25   recreational land in such a way to affect its use would also be considered significant.

26   3.2.2.1           Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

27   The Proposed Action has the potential to provide long-term, beneficial impacts to recreational resources  
28   in Wyoming. Expanding the PLPW Access Program would create more opportunities for citizens to enjoy  
29   the wildlife-related recreational activities throughout Wyoming. Expansion of the programs would allow  
30   more opportunities and venues for hunting and fishing on private property. Therefore, the Proposed  
31   Action would have long-term, beneficial impacts to recreational resources in Wyoming.

32   3.2.2.2           No Action Alternative

33   Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no use of VPA-HIP funds to increase enrollment in the  
34   PLPW Access Program. There would be limited expansion of PLPW related hunting and fishing

1 opportunities on private lands in Wyoming; therefore, under the No Action Alternative there would be no  
2 impacts to recreation. The PLPW Access Program would continue as it is currently administered.

### 3 **3.3 SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

4 Socioeconomics for this PEA includes an investigation of population and demographic statistics as well  
5 as a discussion on the payouts to landowners from public access programs.

6 EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income*  
7 *Populations*, requires a Federal agency to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by  
8 identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high human health or environmental effects  
9 of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” A minority  
10 population can be defined by race, by ethnicity, or by a combination of the two classifications.

11 According to CEQ, a minority is defined as being one of the following groups: American Indian or  
12 Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, not of Hispanic origin, or Hispanic. A minority  
13 population is defined as one of these groups exceeding 50 percent of the population in an area or the  
14 minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population  
15 percentage in the general population (CEQ 1997). The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) defines ethnicity as  
16 either being of Hispanic origin or not being of Hispanic origin. Hispanic origin is further defined as “a  
17 person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America, or other Spanish culture or origin  
18 regardless of race” (USCB 2001).

19 Each year the USCB defines the national poverty thresholds, which are measured in terms of household  
20 income and are dependent upon the number of persons within the household. Individuals falling below the  
21 poverty threshold are considered low-income individuals. USCB census tracts where at least 20 percent of  
22 the residents are considered poor are known as poverty areas (USCB 1995). When the percentage of  
23 residents considered poor is greater than 40 percent, the census tract is considered an extreme poverty  
24 area.

#### 25 **3.3.1 Affected Environment**

26 The Proposed Action has the potential to take place on any qualified private land in Wyoming.  
27 Participation in the PLPW Access Program is completely voluntary, with no targeted area. Therefore, the  
28 socioeconomic data presented is for the entire state.

##### 29 3.3.1.1 Population and Demographics

30 As of 2010, Wyoming had an estimated population of 563,626 people. Traditionally, Wyoming’s  
31 economy has been rooted in agriculture, with livestock being a large part of the land use in the state. In  
32 2007, almost 90 percent of farmland in Wyoming was used as pasture, with only about 9 percent used for  
33 crops (USDA 2007). In more recent years, mineral extraction and tourism have played a larger part in  
34 Wyoming’s broader economy. Over the past 30 years, Wyoming’s population has slowly grown and is  
35 split with approximately 2/3 living in rural areas (396,438 people) and 1/3 in urban centers (167,188  
36 people) (USDA Economic Research Service 2012).

1 Wyoming's population is predominately white, with 90.7 percent of residents claiming this ethnicity in  
2 2010. Other races within Wyoming rank as follows: African American, 0.9 percent; Asian, 0.8 percent;  
3 American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.4 percent; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0.1 percent;  
4 and Hispanic, 8.9 percent. People of Hispanic or Latino origins make up the largest minority population  
5 in Wyoming (USCB 2012).

6 In 2010, an estimated 9.8 percent of people in Wyoming were below the poverty level, which is less than  
7 the nation as a whole (13.8 percent), and ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation for persons living below the poverty  
8 level. Educationally, of persons over the age of 25, 91.3 percent have attained a high school diploma or  
9 equivalent, and 23.6 percent have a Bachelor's degree or higher (USCB 2012).

#### 10 3.3.1.2 Employment, Income, and Public Access Programs

11 With the economic downturn, most states exhibited less employment opportunities and increased  
12 unemployment. Wyoming faced similar circumstances. However, between 2003 and 2009 Wyoming's  
13 total employment increased by 16.5 percent. During the height of the economic downturn, from 2008 to  
14 2009, Wyoming's total employment fell by only 2.3 percent, as compared to 3.2 percent for the nation as  
15 a whole (Wyoming Economic Analysis Division 2011). Unemployment has also increased in recent  
16 years, and the state's unemployment rate was 7 percent in 2010. This is lower than the 9.6 percent for the  
17 nation, and Wyoming ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> nationally for unemployment (Wyoming Economic Analysis Division  
18 2012).

19 Median household income between 2006 and 2010 was \$53,802, just above the national average of  
20 \$51,914. Per capita income in 2010 was estimated to be \$27,860, which is almost equal the national  
21 average of \$27,334 (USCB 2012).

22 The Proposed Action has the potential to directly impact Wyoming's privately held farms, ranches, and  
23 forested lands. In 2007 there were 11,069 farms comprising 30,169,526 acres of land in Wyoming. This  
24 yields an average farm size of 2,726 acres (USDA 2007). Currently, landowners enrolled in the PLPW  
25 Access Program receive annual compensation for enrollment. This ranges from \$368 to \$1,890 per year  
26 for the landowner depending on acreage or length of stream enrolled. With the 5 percent bonus payments  
27 the total for enrolling in a three year contract (the life of the VPA-HIP funding), the greatest annual  
28 payout for PLPW Access Program enrollment would be \$2,079.

#### 29 **3.3.2 Environmental Consequences**

30 Significance of an impact to socioeconomics varies depending on the setting of the Proposed Action, but  
31 40 CFR 1508.8 states that effects may include those that induce changes in the pattern of land use,  
32 population density, or growth rate.

33 Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same  
34 degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and has equal access to the decision-making  
35 process. Significant environmental justice impacts would result if access to decision-making documents

1 was denied or if any adverse environmental effects occurred that would disproportionately affect minority  
2 or low-income populations.

3 3.3.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

4 Under the Proposed Action, WGFD would use the \$2.7 million in VPA-HIP funds to expand the existing  
5 PLPW Access Program over the next three years. Approximately \$1.8 million would be used for  
6 landowner easements (\$600,000 per year, for three years). At current department payout schedules, this  
7 would equate to a minimum of 288 additional landowners that would be able to enroll, providing the  
8 lands were qualified. The monetary payouts to landowners would offer direct economic benefits to the  
9 landowners with eligible properties that voluntarily enroll. The level of monetary compensation would  
10 depend on the amount of acreage or stream length enrolled in any of PLPW's individual programs.  
11 However, the maximum that would be paid out annually to any single landowner for enrollment would be  
12 \$2,079. This would represent a rather minor beneficial economic impact to qualified landowners.

13 WGFD would also use VPA-HIP funds to hire four full-time contract employees to act as regional access  
14 coordinators over the three years of funding. The state would also be re-divided into seven smaller  
15 regions, thereby reducing the total land area any one regional access coordinator has to cover. The four  
16 full-time jobs would constitute a slight economic benefit to the state, though this would be temporary as  
17 the jobs are not permanent positions.

18 Indirectly, the increased hunting and fishing opportunities on enrolled private lands would be beneficial to  
19 local economies. Traveling sportsmen and wildlife watchers would spend dollars at local eateries, hotels  
20 for lodging, gas stations, and for any other goods and supplies that might be necessary for the hunting or  
21 fishing trip. Increasing the amount of high quality lands for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing within  
22 Wyoming may attract out of state sportsmen, thereby bringing in more economic gain for local  
23 communities.

24 Under the Proposed Action, there would be no disproportionate impact to minorities or low income  
25 populations in Wyoming. The PLPW Access Program is voluntary and would only target landowners  
26 with suitable habitat. Once enrolled, landowners must give equal access to all sportsmen with a valid  
27 hunting/fishing license. Since the PLPW Access Program provides free public access to enrolled lands,  
28 high quality hunting ground can be accessed by anyone regardless of income, which may not be the case  
29 in areas that require fees for hunting and fishing access.

30 3.3.2.2 No Action Alternative

31 Under the No Action Alternative, WGFD would not receive funding under the VPA-HIP. The No Action  
32 Alternative would not allow for any of the positive impacts from the introduction of the VPA-HIP  
33 funding into the economy, nor would it allow for the expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities on  
34 private lands, which also brings economic benefit via lodging and purchase of goods and supplies.  
35 Therefore, the long term positive environmental benefits from activities associated with the PLPW Access  
36 Program would be diminished.

This page intentionally left blank.

1 **CHAPTER 4.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND IRREVERSIBLE AND**  
2 **IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES**

---

3 **4.1 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

4 CEQ regulations stipulate that the cumulative impacts analysis within a PEA should consider the potential  
5 environmental impacts resulting from “the incremental impacts of the action when added to past, present,  
6 and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other  
7 actions” (40 CFR 1508.7). CEQ guidance in considering cumulative impacts involves defining the scope  
8 of the other actions and their interrelationship with the Proposed Action. The scope must consider  
9 geographical and temporal overlaps among the Proposed Action and other actions. It must also evaluate  
10 the nature of interactions among these actions.

11 Cumulative impacts are most likely to arise when a relationship or synergism exists between the Proposed  
12 Action and other actions expected to occur in a similar location or during a similar time period. Actions  
13 overlapping with or in proximity to the Proposed Action would be expected to have more potential for a  
14 relationship than those more geographically separated.

15 In this PEA, the affected environment for cumulative impacts includes all of Wyoming since the public  
16 access programs are available statewide. In addition to VPA-HIP, several other Federal and state  
17 programs in Wyoming focus on conservation. Federal programs include the Conservation Reserve  
18 Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the  
19 Wetlands Reserve Program. Wildlife conservation in the state of Wyoming is a multi-agency coordinated  
20 effort. Another active program for wildlife and fish conservation and habitat restoration is the Partners for  
21 Fish and Wildlife program established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This board-based  
22 partnership includes Wyoming landowners, local communities, conservation districts, sportsman groups,  
23 non-governmental organizations, federal and state agencies, and others interested in addressing  
24 conservation needs of landowners and the landscape (USFWS 2012b).

25 Because the Proposed Action is largely administrative in scope, there would be little cumulative impact to  
26 the environment. Habitat improvement activities would not be part of the Proposed Action. More private  
27 land could be added to the PLPW Access Program, allowing more access and more acreage for hunting  
28 and fishing within Wyoming. Long-term cumulative impacts to game populations would not occur  
29 because these populations are monitored and managed for long-term sustainability. Indirect positive  
30 socioeconomic impacts from increased hunting and fishing trips and revenues generated from hunting and  
31 fishing would be minor, but could become long-term if enrolled landowners remain enrolled for multiple  
32 years. Cumulative impacts from the Proposed Action are expected to be negligible, but mostly beneficial  
33 to the environment.

34 **4.2 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES**

35 Irreversible and irretrievable commitments are related to the use of nonrenewable resources and the effect  
36 that the use of these resources has on future generations. Irreversible effects primarily result from the use

1 or destruction of a specific resource that cannot be replaced within a reasonable time frame. Irretrievable  
2 resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource that cannot be restored as a result  
3 of the action. Under the Proposed Action, no habitat improvement or development of any kind would be  
4 undertaken. The Proposed Action is administrative in nature and increases the funds available to enroll  
5 landowners with suitable land, as well as hire four full time contract employees to assist with enrollment  
6 duties. Though the Proposed Action could increase recreational hunting and fishing, these populations are  
7 managed for sustainability. Therefore, there would be no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of  
8 resources.

1 **CHAPTER 5.0 MITIGATION MEASURES**

---

2 The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, minimize, or eliminate significant negative impacts on affected  
3 resources. CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.20) state that mitigation includes:

- 4 • Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- 5 • Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- 6 • Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- 7 • Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations  
8 during the life of the action.
- 9 • Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

10 CEQ regulations state that all relevant reasonable mitigation measures that could avoid or minimize  
11 significant impacts should be identified, even if they are outside the jurisdiction of the lead agency or the  
12 cooperating agencies. This serves to alert agencies or officials who can implement these extra measures,  
13 and will encourage them to do so. The lead agency for this Proposed Action is FSA. The state partner  
14 agency is WGFD.

15 There are no expected long-term, significant negative impacts associated with implementation of the  
16 VPA-HIP in Wyoming. No habitat improvement projects would occur as part of the Proposed Action,  
17 which is administrative in nature. A WGFD representative would ensure that any lands or water bodies  
18 enrolled in the PLPW Access Program would be of adequate quality and support game and fish  
19 populations able to withstand new hunting and fishing pressure. No significant impacts requiring any  
20 mitigation are anticipated.

(This page intentionally left blank)

1 **CHAPTER 6.0 PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONTACTED**

---

2 Farm Service Agency

3 Bureau of Land Management

4 United States Forest Service

5 Natural Resources Conservation Service

6 United States Fish and Wildlife Service

(This page intentionally left blank)

## **CHAPTER 7.0 REFERENCES**

---

- 1
- 2 Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). 1997. Council on Environmental Quality. Guidance under the  
3 National Environmental Policy Act.
- 4 U.S. Census Bureau (USCB). 2012. State and County Quickfacts for Wyoming. Accessed at  
5 <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/56000.html>. March.
- 6 USCB. 2001. Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin. Census 2000 Brief.
- 7 USCB. 1995. Poverty Areas. Statistical Brief.  
8 <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/povarea.html>. Accessed May.
- 9 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2007. Census of Agriculture: State Profile for Wyoming.  
10 Accessed at:  
11 [http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online\\_Highlights/County\\_Profiles/Wyoming/  
12 cp99056.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Wyoming/cp99056.pdf) March.
- 13 USDA Economic Research Service. 2012. State Fact Sheets for Wyoming. Accessed at:  
14 <http://www.ers.usda.gov/StateFacts/HTML2PDF/WY-Fact-Sheet.pdf> March.
- 15 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2012. Greenbook – Currently Designated  
16 Nonattainment Areas for All Criteria Pollutants. Accessed at:  
17 <http://www.epa.gov/oaqps001/greenbk/anc13.html> February.
- 18 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2012a. Listings and occurrences of threatened and endangered  
19 species in Wyoming. Access at  
20 [http://ecos.fws.gov/tess\\_public/pub/stateListingAndOccurrenceIndividual.jsp?state=WY](http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/pub/stateListingAndOccurrenceIndividual.jsp?state=WY) on 13  
21 March.
- 22 USFWS. 2012b. Partners for Fish and Wildlife – Introduction and General Description. Accessed at:  
23 <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pfw/wy/wy2a.htm> March
- 24 Wyoming Economic Analysis Division. 2012. Wyoming 2012 – Just the Facts. Accessed at:  
25 [http://eadiv.state.wy.us/Wy\\_facts/facts2012.pdf](http://eadiv.state.wy.us/Wy_facts/facts2012.pdf) March.
- 26 Wyoming Economic Analysis Division. 2011. They Wyoming Employment, Income, and Gross  
27 Domestic Product Report. December.
- 28 Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). 2011a. Wyoming Hunting Guide for 2011.
- 29 WGFD. 2011b. Wyoming Fishing Guide for 2011.

(This page intentionally left blank)

1 **CHAPTER 8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS**

---

2 **USDA Farm Service Agency**

3 Matthew Ponish, National Environmental Compliance Manager

---

5 **Wyoming Game and Fish Department**

6 Matt Buhler, Statewide Access Coordinator

---

8 **TEC, Inc.**

9 Dana Banwart, Project Director

10 B.S. Biology

11 14 years related experience

12 Michael Harrison, Project Manager

13 M.S. Environmental Science

14 8 years related experience

15 Stephen Anderson, Technical Analyst

16 B.A. Environmental Science

17 4 years related experience

18 Sharon Simpson, Administrative Support

19 A.S. Science

20 13 years related experience

(This page intentionally left blank)

**APPENDIX A – AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE**

(This page intentionally left blank)



April 13, 2012

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

Farm Service  
Agency

1400 Independence  
Ave, SW  
Stop 0513  
Washington, DC  
20250-0513

**TO:** Bureau of Land Management  
Attn: Don Simpson, State Director  
P.O. Box 1828  
Cheyenne, WY 82003

**FROM:** Matthew T. Ponish  
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency  
National Environmental Compliance Manager

**SUBJECT:** Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Wyoming

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Wyoming Game and Fish Department has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for Wyoming. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **May 17, 2012**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Mike Harrison at: [michael.harrison@cardnotec.com](mailto:michael.harrison@cardnotec.com)

Written comments may be mailed to:

CardnoTEC Inc.  
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300  
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD



April 13, 2012

**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

Farm Service  
Agency

1400 Independence  
Ave, SW  
Stop 0513  
Washington, DC  
20250-0513

**TO:** U.S. Forest Service  
740 Simms Street  
Golden, CO 80401

**FROM:** Matthew T. Ponish  
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency  
National Environmental Compliance Manager

**SUBJECT:** Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Wyoming

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Wyoming Game and Fish Department has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for Wyoming. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:  
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **May 17, 2012**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Mike Harrison at: [michael.harrison@cardnotec.com](mailto:michael.harrison@cardnotec.com)

Written comments may be mailed to:

CardnoTEC Inc.  
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300  
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD



April 13, 2012

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

Farm Service  
Agency

1400 Independence  
Ave, SW  
Stop 0513  
Washington, DC  
20250-0513

**TO:** Wyoming State Farm Service Agency  
Attn: Gregor Goertz, State Executive Director  
951 Werner Court  
Ste. 130  
Casper, WY 82601-1303

**FROM:** Matthew T. Ponish  
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency  
National Environmental Compliance Manager

**SUBJECT:** Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Wyoming

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Wyoming Game and Fish Department has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for Wyoming. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **May 17, 2012**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Mike Harrison at: [michael.harrison@cardnotec.com](mailto:michael.harrison@cardnotec.com)

Written comments may be mailed to:

CardnoTEC Inc.  
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300  
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD



April 13, 2012

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

Farm Service  
Agency

1400 Independence  
Ave, SW  
Stop 0513  
Washington, DC  
20250-0513

**TO:** Wyoming National Resource Conservation Service  
Attn: Mary Schrader, Resource Conseravationist/Farm Bill  
100 East B Street  
3rd Floor  
Casper, WY 82602-5011

**FROM:** Matthew T. Ponish  
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency  
National Environmental Compliance Manager

**SUBJECT:** Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Wyoming

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Wyoming Game and Fish Department has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for Wyoming. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **May 17, 2012**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Mike Harrison at: [michael.harrison@cardnotec.com](mailto:michael.harrison@cardnotec.com)

Written comments may be mailed to:

CardnoTEC Inc.  
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300  
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD



April 13, 2012

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

Farm Service  
Agency

1400 Independence  
Ave, SW  
Stop 0513  
Washington, DC  
20250-0513

**TO:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
5353 Yellowstone Road  
Suite 308A  
Cheyenne, WY 82009

**FROM:** Matthew T. Ponish  
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency  
National Environmental Compliance Manager

**SUBJECT:** Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Wyoming

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Wyoming Game and Fish Department has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for Wyoming. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **May 17, 2012**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Mike Harrison at: [michael.harrison@cardnotec.com](mailto:michael.harrison@cardnotec.com)

Written comments may be mailed to:

CardnoTEC Inc.  
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300  
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD

