

(Based upon August 2017 Scoping Document)
**To the Medicine Bow National Forest: Reasons
to withdraw the Medicine Bow Landscape
Vegetation Analysis Project**
Meeting, January 16, 2018

Itinerary and request for suggestions given by Duane Keown to Joy Keown, Connie Wilbert and Dr. Dan Tinker prior to the January 16th meeting with the Medicine Bow National Forest officials

The meeting with the principals of Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF) is an opportunity to see our outside look at LaVA. I have kept the officials of the Bow up to date with what is happening in opposition to LaVA. They have received the four-page letter sent certified to Brian Ferebee, Region 4 Forester, asking the Forest Service to withdraw the LaVA. Officials have received the *Casper Star Tribune* article titled, "NEPA: The Magna Carta of Environmental Laws," the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* column, "Should the Snowy Range forests be crops, as agriculture?" and they will receive "The New Gold Mine in the Snowies," which will be in the *Boomerang* this week Jan. 16th – Jan. 21, 2018. And they have received Dr. Dan Tinker's "THOUGHTS RELATED TO THE LANDSCAPE VEGETATION ANALYSIS ON THE MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST, WYOMING." Dan sends his regrets that he is out of town and cannot be at the January 16th meeting. The Forest Service has been informed that all Wyoming environmental organizations and sportsman's organizations, that were not notified about the August 8th Scoping Meeting, and all those who signed the petition for another meeting, have now been informed of the failure to notify the public and have now been told about LaVA, by us. Also, more than 100 friends of the Bow, who were not aware of LaVA, have now been informed by myself.

The meeting is to be with Bow Supervisor, Russ Bacon, Melissa Martin, the Chief Administrator for LaVA, and Frank Romero, who is the Laramie District Ranger in charge of carrying out LaVA. Reasons to withdraw LaVA are those given to Rocky Mountain Region Forester, Brian Ferebee. They are with elaboration given in this document.

1. Forest officials are asked if they recall Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue's comment at Boise State University in June 2017 when asked about the Forest Service: Perdue said, "Regarding the U.S. Forest Service and our public lands, I think it's time we started looking at forests as crops, as agriculture..." Is their leader's vision theirs also? The rebuttal below is from the column in the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* published January 11, 2018. Perdue was the governor of Georgia where all forest products come from private land. Only 8% of the state is public land. Georgia gets 50 inches of rain annually — Wyoming gets 12.5 inches. In Georgia a commercially valuable pine grows in less than 30 years. It takes at least 100 years in the Rockies for a tree to become valuable for lumber. Trees grow where they get enough moisture. In the Rockies that is where the mountains lift the forests to elevations with suitable moisture. They cover canyons, mesa tops, and reach to timberline and lace snow capped peaks. From throughout the states and the world, tourists come for recreation vacations. Does this sound like the Snowies? Then in the request for withdrawal of LaVA, we go through the other reasons given to Forester Ferebee.

2. Joy Keown will read the summary "Thoughts" of Dr Tinker" as they were published in the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* last Thursday. Dr. Daniel Tinker is the Forest Ecologist in the Botany Department at UW. He served on Governor Mead's Forest Task Force and

has worked and conducted research in the MBNF for over two decades. He states, “Studies of forest recovery from Wyoming and other states in the region have suggested that recovery of forest structure and function – largely through surviving overstory trees and “advance regeneration” of smaller understory trees – is already occurring, much of it in the absence of any active forest management treatments.” And regarding fires, he says, “Removing woody fuels in an attempt to reduce the likelihood of large, high-intensity fires is appropriate only in areas around human settlement or adjacent to other non-federal lands. These types of fires have occurred for thousands of years.”

3. Half of the Medicine Bow is in Albany County. We spoke with the Albany County Commissioners in their regular meeting December 19, 2017 and told them of the mishandling of the Scoping Meeting and how outrageous the size of the planned LaVA “Mechanical Treatment” is relative to the area of the Bow forest. This information is now with the public. The title of the article about the Commissioners meeting, written by a *Boomerang* writer is, “Failure of the Forest Service to Notify the Public.” and was on page 3. December 22, 2017. From the editorial that will be printed in the *Boomerang* this week, Jan. 14 – 21st, “The New Gold Mine in the Snowies”, I state, “The lack of notification violated Code of Federal Regulations 1501.7, Scoping A (1).” This information was given to us by the Western Environmental Law Center.

4. The harvesting (Mechanical Treatment) of the forest is in sharp conflict with recreation in the Medicine Bow Forest, which has become a gold mine for the towns of Laramie and Saratoga especially, and the entire counties of Albany, Carbon and Laramie. The Snowy Range is becoming for Laramie and Saratoga what the Rocky Mountain National Park is for Estes Park.

The commercial logging in Wyoming does not appear on the charts that show industries’ contributions to Wyoming’s economy. It contributes less than one percent, whereas tourism and recreation are second only to fossil fuel production. Domestic and international visitors in Wyoming spent **\$3.2 billion in 2016**. Wyoming welcomed **8.5 million** overnight visitors. Visitor spending directly affected Wyoming’s economy by generating **\$171 million** in local and state tax revenues. The state’s tourism industry **supported 31,770 full and part-time jobs**. Each Wyoming household would pay **\$730** more in taxes without the tax revenue generated by the travel and tourism industry. I have made the Laramie City Council and the Albany County Commissioners aware of these numbers. I have yet to meet with the Wyoming Office of Tourism, or the Laramie Chamber of Commerce. Cheyenne’s use of the Bow for recreation equals or exceeds Laramie’s use.

5. If you look at the map of Mechanical Treatment (page 19) of the Scoping Plan and the map of the Treatment Opportunity Areas on page 2, they are virtually the same. The plan is to log (Mechanically Treat) 51.2% of the Medicine Bow Forest. As listed in the Scoping plan this is 561,414 acres. It includes both sides of the Snowy Range Road (Highway 130) right through the spectacular view-sheds on the north and south sides of the road. And it is the same for the Battle Highway between Encampment and Baggs, Wyoming. This will be a focus of our continuing opposition to the LaVA plan. It will be destructive to the economic gold mine in tourism and recreation that the Medicine Bow Forest has become. And this use continues to grow. Five hundred and sixty-one thousand acres is planned to be accessed with 10 miles of permanent road and 600 miles of temporary road. I am a science teacher and I like to make abstract ideas bridge

to the concrete. From Laramie 600 miles east is 60 miles past Omaha, Nebraska into Iowa.

6. In a conversation with the News Editor, Eric Lawson, of the *Coloradoan* in Ft. Collins, I told him that there were more green (Colorado) license plates in the Bow than Wyoming plates last summer. He said, "I know it. There are nearly five million people on the Front Range of Colorado. They escape to the Medicine Bow for solitude." We are working with the media and environmental organizations of northern Colorado also. I will meet with the News Editor, Lawson, of the *Coloradoan* tomorrow to give him the Ferebee letter asking withdrawal of LaVA, and give him articles opposing LaVA in the *Casper Star Tribune*, *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* and the *Boomerang*.

Brian Rutledge, who headed the Regional Office of the Audubon Society in Ft. Collins, was promoted to Vice President of the National Audubon Society because of his leadership in protecting the Sage Grouse in Wyoming and the West, has joined our side and brings the national society and especially the regional division of Audubon in Fort Collins to work in our camp. They are receiving our materials to go to their members and others. Of course all environmental organizations of Wyoming and sportsman's groups of Wyoming have joined us. None of these organizations were notified of the scoping meeting in August.

7. The Wyoming Department of Transportation tells us that more than 1,000 cars is the average daily number that go by the Forest Visitor Center west of Centennial as they enjoy the Snowy Range. The Snowies are becoming the Wyoming equivalent of Rocky Mountain National Park. It is every bit as scenic and we who live near it are eager to protect it. But through the year the Snowy Range is even more than a National Park. The summer visitors fill the campgrounds and parking lots at trailheads. Come fall we have the hunters and then the thousands who come to snowmobile. You have been to the parking lots on all sides of the Range. The snowmobilers represent many states throughout the snow season. Of course there is skiing also on the Snowy Range Course.

8. My wife and I, and Connie Wilbert with the Sierra Club were at the Public Lands Rally on August 26th with a petition to the officials of the Medicine Bow Forest for another Scoping Meeting, since the only Albany County Public Scoping Meeting, August 8th, was a failure because the public was not notified. Fewer than 20 citizens attended. The population of Albany County is 36,000. Frank Romero called me and said the Forest Service would not grant us another Scoping Meeting. But this paragraph is primarily about public lands and the Public Lands Rally last August 26th, the second in Wyoming, and many more are planned. As you are aware, the public ownership of public lands is under attack by those who would sell it for private gain. At a meeting on a proposed Wyoming Legislature bill (proposed by the President of the Wyoming Senate, Eli Bebout), for the state to manage and the likelihood of selling public lands, I quoted former Senator Al Simpson: Al sees the motive in state control of our public lands. He said, "If you get this stuff into state hands, it is not going to be available because the state would have the power to dispose of it, and when they get in a crunch – like all of them are – they are going to peddle it off and put it into the coffer, not thinking of what that does to the guys like you and me who know where this trail is into the fishing hole, hunting spot, or backpacking area...forget it." (From the Wyoming Wildlife Federation web page, February 2016) Shortly after that packed Cheyenne meeting were there was

not one person who spoke in favor of state management, Bebout pulled the proposed bill. The public is expecting the Forest Service to preserve the forest for all of us to use, and not to cut it down and call it management. Refer to Dr. Tinker's thoughts. He was on Governor Mead's Forest Task Force. What is at stake for the Forest Service in LaVA is severe damage to their rapport with the public as we make the facts of the project aware to our citizens. For the Forest Service this should be very important, even critical.

9. The Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis Scoping Plan does not address the cost of this largest project ever on the Medicine Bow. The sale of logs does not sustain operation of the Forest Service, even in the Northwest. Nor should it, the forests are so important. It is not even a close comparison. The value of forest products sold from Wyoming does not come up on the pie chart for industries' contributions to the economy of the state. And for the Region 4 of the Forest Service, the value of Medicine Bow logs sold does not come up online. However, it does for the Ashley National Forest — I suppose as an example for Region 4 — a good adjoining comparison. In Ashley the value of cut logs to the Forest Service for the first three quarters of 2017 was \$75,719. What was the cost of operation of the Forest Service in Ashley National Forest? It was not available. But for the nation as a whole, harvesting of National Forest trees has gone from a high in 1970 of 20 billion board feet to 2.5 billion board feet in 2015. It reflects the changed values of the people for their forests.

But we are asking the Forest Service to preserve the Saratoga Sawmill that provides 100 onsite jobs and another 50 for contract loggers, truckers and drivers, according to Clint Georg, manager and part owner. It uses the beetle kill logs to produce 2x4s. The production is sustainable without severe conflict with the main economic link to the Bow for Saratoga, which like Laramie's link is recreation and tourism.

These are our primary reasons for the Forest Service to withdraw the LaVA.

Dr. Duane Keown, Professor Emeritus, Science Education, University of Wyoming

Joy Keown, retired Biology teacher, and Ranger Naturalist at Yellowstone National Park

Connie Wilbert, Wyoming State Director of the Sierra Club

Dr. Dan Tinker, Professor, Forest Ecologist, Botany Department, University of Wyoming