



Agreement # NRFBC23MOU0012460

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN THE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AND THE  
STATE OF WYOMING**

**Project Title: A partnership to Conserve Big Game Habitat in Wyoming**

***Background:***

The State of Wyoming (The State) is home to some of the Nation's most diverse and abundant migratory big game herds. The productivity and abundance of these herds is important to sustaining the State's and the Nation's biodiversity and many economic and cultural values.

Migratory big game herds range widely across large landscapes to find food and shelter. They depend heavily on habitats distributed across large areas of privately owned working lands, multiple-use public land, Tribal land, parks, and wilderness areas to meet their year-round needs.

The State has long worked to conserve big game, including via Executive Order 2020-01, "Mule Deer and Antelope Migration Corridor Protection" (MCEO), and Federal partnerships formed during the Trump Administration via Department of Interior (DOI) Secretarial Order 3362, "Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors."

The State also shares key interests with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), including conserving and restoring big game migrations and supporting the productivity of ranches and farms in ways that honor private property rights. These interests are expressed in the State's MCEO, the Biden Administration's overall efforts to advance locally led and voluntary conservation of wildlife corridors, and USDA Secretary's Memorandum 1077-004 directing the US Forest Service (USFS) to seek cross-jurisdictional partnerships to enable wildlife migration.

The USDA, through agencies within the Farm Production and Conservation, Natural Resources and Environment, and Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission areas, has a variety of policies and programs that can help conserve and restore habitats of migratory big game, and reduce related wildlife conflicts, by providing resources and on-the-ground technical assistance.

The State's agencies, including the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, and the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, have

knowledge, management expertise, resources, and stakeholder relationships that are needed to help guide successful conservation efforts.

***Purpose:***

The State and USDA agree to create and maintain a partnership that strategically invests technical capacity and resources in the conservation, restoration, management, and long-term stewardship of multiple-use public and private lands that support migratory big game.

***Together, USDA and the State of Wyoming agree to:***

- Co-determine geographic priority areas for implementing voluntary conservation projects and practices.
- Support and incentivize stewardship of private lands, multiple-use public lands, and Tribal lands that enhances wildlife habitat in the identified priority areas.
- Seek opportunities to creatively combine Federal, State and private resources in a streamlined package for conservation partners, including private landowners.
- Establish a forum for regular communications to coordinate Federal, State, and private actions and investments.
- Seek opportunities to create diverse local teams to help deliver technical assistance, assist in project implementation, and provide appropriate follow-up and monitoring.
- Collaborate to develop evidence-based approaches to monitor and assess outcomes of conservation activity within priority areas.
- Coordinate communications about this partnership and its shared outcomes, including opportunities for landowners and partner organizations to participate in the effort.
- Collaborate with tribes to identify aligning Federal, State, and Tribal land stewardship priorities and seek opportunities for leveraging Federal, State, and Tribal resources to meet identified conservation needs.

***USDA will:***

Through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA),

- Provide a dedicated big-game migration coordinator and point of contact within the State of Wyoming.
- Dedicate or prioritize resources from NRCS' Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and Regional Conservation Partnership Program for identified priority areas, and seek opportunities to enhance resources to meet the needs of private landowners and other conservation partners, including tribes, in Wyoming.

- Maintain special priority for wildlife corridors under FSA's Grasslands Conservation Reserve Program and identify additional flexibilities and enhancements that improve delivery of this program to meet conservation partners' interest in conservation leasing.

Through the USFS,

- Provide a dedicated big-game migration coordinator and point of contact within USFS to work with the State, tribes, and other external partners, and across USFS regions within Wyoming.

Through the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service,

- Provide assistance, as requested and as resources allow, to landowners and tribes in protecting livestock, crops, human health and safety, and natural resources by reducing wildlife conflicts that can arise in association with the conservation of big game corridors and seasonal ranges, within identified priority areas.

***The State of Wyoming will:***

- Assist in outreach and education, statewide and locally, to promote opportunities under this partnership and increase their success.
- Provide on-the-ground technical expertise and assistance to enhance the implementation of USDA and state program opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to contribute State agency or trust resources, subject to requisite board, commission, or legislative approvals, to this partnership in ways that enhance outcomes for wildlife and habitat, and/or increase flexibility for private landowners.
- Facilitate the involvement of MCEO Area Working Groups in local teams under this partnership.

***General Provisions:***

- USDA, the State, and their respective agencies and offices will handle their own activities and utilize their own resources, including the expenditure of their own funds, in pursuing these objectives. Each participant will carry out its separate activities in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner.
- Nothing in this MOU shall obligate either USDA or the State to obligate or transfer any funds. Specific work projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, or property among the various agencies and offices of USDA and the State will require execution of separate agreements and be contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds. Such activities must be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This MOU does not provide such authority. Negotiation, execution, and administration of each such agreement must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations.

- This MOU takes effect upon the signature of the parties and shall remain in effect for five years from the date of execution. This MOU may be extended or amended upon written request of either USDA or the State and the subsequent written concurrence of the other party. Either USDA or the State may terminate this MOU with a 60-day written notice to the other.
- This MOU is not intended to, and does not create, any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity, by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any person.

***Contacts:***

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Martin Lowenfish  
Branch Chief for Area Wide Planning  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250  
[martin.lowenfish@usda.gov](mailto:martin.lowenfish@usda.gov)  
202-573-2448

**State of Wyoming**

Brian Nesvik  
Director  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
5400 Bishop Blvd  
Cheyenne, WY 82006  
[brian.nesvik@wyo.gov](mailto:brian.nesvik@wyo.gov)  
307-777-4501

**Signatures:**

In witness whereof, the parties to this MOU through their duly authorized representatives have executed this MOU on the days and dates set out below, and certify that they have read, understood, and agreed to the terms and conditions of this MOU as set forth herein.



Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

October 17, 2022

Date



Mark Gordon  
Governor, State of Wyoming

17-October-2022

Date