



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

MEDICINE BOW-ROUTT NATIONAL FORESTS

Response to Comments on the Pole Mountain Area Permanent Seasonal Recreational Shooting Order

September 6, 2023

The 60-day comment period for the proposed permanent seasonal recreational shooting order for the Pole Mountain Area began on April 12, 2023 and ended on June 10, 2023. The Forest Service received 13 comments from 12 individuals and one organization.

Nine commenters expressed support for the proposed permanent seasonal recreational shooting order; three commenters recommended a year-round recreational shooting and hunting prohibition; and one commenter recommended establishing a permanent recreational shooting area. The Forest Service's response to these comments—which were consolidated under three topics—is provided below.

Comment: Nine commenters supported the proposed permanent seasonal recreational shooting order.

Response: This order will implement the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact – Limiting Firearm Use Within the Pole Mountain Area (DN), allowing for the continued use of firearms during the big game, waterfowl, small game, and upland game bird hunting seasons, thereby preserving an important recreational opportunity at Pole Mountain.

Comment: Three commenters recommended that the Forest Service prohibit recreational shooting and hunting year-round in the Pole Mountain Area.

Response: The Forest Service received similar comments regarding the Allotment Management Plan Revisions for the Pole Mountain Grazing Allotments and Limiting Firearm Use Within the Pole Mountain Area Environmental Assessment (EA) and (DN), which the permanent seasonal recreation shooting order implements. The main objectives of the permanent seasonal recreational shooting prohibition are the safety of other recreationists and reduction of property and natural resource damage. Based on the analysis in the EA, the DN determined that a permanent seasonal prohibition from March 31 to September 10—which is the time of peak recreational use and use of the Pole Mountain Area by elk—would meet these objectives.

The DN also determined that prohibiting hunting was not necessary to achieve these objectives. Therefore, the proposed and final permanent seasonal recreational shooting orders do not

prohibit hunting and specifically exempt persons in possession of a valid State of Wyoming hunting license who are hunting in compliance with state law.

Comment: One commenter recommended that the Forest Service establish an area where recreational shooting is permitted year-round.

Response: The proposed and final orders implement the DN, which prohibits recreational shooting seasonally in the Pole Mountain Area. Recreational shooting is allowed year-round on the remaining approximately 2.2 million acres of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests outside the Pole Mountain Area. There are also four shooting clubs in the Cheyenne area, as well as rifle range and trap club in Laramie.