

The Honorable Liz Cheney  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
Dear Representative Cheney

The Honorable Jim Barrasso  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

As do you, we in Teton county feel fortunate to live amidst big landscapes, where large tracks of less-trammeled land offer lovers of the outdoors—hunters, fishermen, hikers, bikers, boaters, campers, snowmobilers, dirt bikers and off-road explorers—expansive opportunities to pursue freedom of recreation, freedom of economic opportunity, freedom to thrive in our individual pursuits. These landscapes also afford many of North America’s most iconic game species the freedom to roam and thrive as wildlife must.

Preserving wild and remote backcountry experiences for all, maintaining healthy wildlife populations, and ensuring a healthy environment for future generations entails limits on human use and presence. Determining those limits isn’t easy.

Teton County’s WPLI committee has been wrestling mightily over finding a balance between access, use and environmental protection on Teton County’s public lands. They’ve wrestled about what type and how much human traffic and congestion fundamentally degrades a backcountry adventure; they’ve tussled over where, how, what and how much human traffic tips game populations, fisheries, and habitats beyond critical thresholds; they’ve poured over maps. They’ve invested a lot of time and effort in the process and taken ownership of and responsibility for a major, major undertaking unrivalled since the 1984 Wyoming Wilderness Act.

HR 4679 does not reflect that effort. It might reflect the interests of at least 1,800 people in and around Teton County that took the time to send a One Click Politics email. It might reflect the interests and goals of High Mountain Heli-skiing. It doesn’t reflect the work of the WPLI committee.

As a result, under HR 4697, environmentalists will continue to exert pressure through any legal means on the Forest Service to regulate uses and use levels. Under HR 4697 advocates of multiple use will continue to exert pressure on the Forest Service to allow past, present and future uses at levels that may or may not have anything to do with environmental stewardship.

Under HR 4697 both sides will continue to try to outflank one another both in and out of court resulting in a legal free-for-all and an even worse management challenge for the Forest Service.

We believe a more long-lasting, durable resolution to the question of how to manage public lands in Teton County, lands that include substantial portions of the Palisades and Shoal Creek Wilderness Study Areas, would be one generated by the WPLI committee. This would be a resolution hashed out over days and days of debate and negotiation, rooted in consensus where all stakeholders are invested in the outcome and where all stakeholders compromised a little in return for a much bigger community gain.

The County Commission does not have a position for or against the specific provisions of H.R. 4697 at this time. We do believe the introduction of this bill seriously damages our community effort. We respectfully request that you withdraw this bill now.

With gratitude for your hard work and efforts on behalf of Teton County and Wyoming,

Mark Newcomb

Smokey Rhea

Natalia Duncan Macker

Greg Epstein

Paul Vogelheim