



Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE, Room 1A  
Washington, DC 20426

December 31, 2025

Submitted via eFiling

**Re: Seminoe Pumped Storage Project, FERC No. 14787-004**  
**WY-WSF Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Dear Secretary Reese:

On behalf of the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WY-WSF), we respectfully submit the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Seminoe Pumped Storage Project (Project). WY-WSF is a science-based conservation organization dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and responsible management of wild sheep and their habitats in Wyoming and across North America.

WY-WSF appreciates the opportunity to participate in this review process and recognizes the Commission's responsibility under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to take a hard look at the environmental consequences of the proposed action, consider reasonable alternatives, and ensure that federal decisions are informed, transparent, and grounded in the best available science.

After careful review of the DEIS, supporting technical documents, and applicable land-use and wildlife management plans, WY-WSF has significant concerns regarding the Project's unavoidable and long-term impacts to the Ferris–Seminoe bighorn sheep herd, other terrestrial wildlife, and the integrity of land-use protections established through public planning processes.

**Importance of the Ferris–Seminoe Bighorn Sheep Herd**

The Ferris–Seminoe bighorn sheep herd represents one of the most biologically and strategically important bighorn sheep populations in Wyoming. It is recognized by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) for its health status and long-term population stability and serves as the only viable source population for future translocations and reintroduction efforts needed to support statewide bighorn sheep conservation.

The long-term viability of this herd is therefore not a localized concern. It is central to Wyoming's broader bighorn sheep conservation strategy. Any action that reduces survival, recruitment, or habitat functionality for this herd carries implications that extend well beyond the project footprint and cannot be evaluated solely as a short-term or site-specific impact.

The DEIS acknowledges that impacts to bighorn sheep crucial winter range could result in reduced winter survival, lower recruitment, and population-level decline. WY-WSF agrees with this assessment and emphasizes that, given the conservation value of this herd, such impacts must be evaluated as biologically significant rather than temporary disturbances that can be readily mitigated.

### **Project Location Within Crucial Habitat**

The DEIS confirms that substantial portions of the Project occur within designated crucial winter range, yearlong range, and parturition habitat for the Ferris–Seminole herd. These habitats represent the most limiting components of the herd’s seasonal range and are essential to maintaining population viability.

The Project would involve three to five years of intensive construction activity, including blasting, excavation, heavy equipment operations, sustained traffic, artificial lighting, and prolonged human presence. For a non-migratory herd with strong site fidelity, repeated disturbance and displacement from winter and lambing habitat during biologically critical periods is likely to increase energetic stress, reduce reproductive success, and elevate mortality risk.

These effects are not readily reversible and cannot be fully offset through post-construction habitat restoration or short-term mitigation measures. Habitat functionality lost during critical seasons has consequences that extend beyond the construction window and into long-term population dynamics.

### **Inconsistency With the Rawlins Resource Management Plan**

The Rawlins Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plan (RMP) establishes enforceable timing and disturbance stipulations for big game crucial winter range and parturition habitat. These stipulations were developed through a public land-use planning process specifically to prevent population-level impacts to wildlife resources.

As acknowledged in the DEIS, compliance with these stipulations would render the Project infeasible under the applicant’s proposed design and construction schedule. WY-WSF is concerned that this conclusion is being used to justify multi-year variances from wildlife protections rather than to evaluate whether the Project is appropriately sited and designed.

Under NEPA and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, land-use plans establish the sideboards within which development must occur. Wildlife conservation standards established



through public planning processes should guide project siting, design, and timing. They should not be weakened to accommodate a project that cannot meet those standards.

The DEIS further acknowledges that the Project is inconsistent with the Rawlins RMP and would require a plan amendment. Amending an approved land-use plan to accommodate a single development proposal that would knowingly degrade designated crucial habitat constitutes a substantive change in management direction and raises concerns regarding precedent, cumulative impacts, and long-term wildlife stewardship.

### **Limits of Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation**

WY-WSF recognizes the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures described in the DEIS, including habitat restoration, traffic management, dust abatement, and wildlife monitoring. While these measures may reduce a specific few localized effects, they do not resolve the fundamental issue of prolonged disturbance and functional habitat loss within winter and parturition ranges.

Monitoring documents impacts after they occur; it does not prevent biological consequences. Adaptive management frameworks cannot reliably address delayed or cumulative stress-related effects that may manifest weeks or months after exposure. Habitat restoration or enhancement elsewhere within the herd unit does not compensate for multi-year losses in survival or recruitment during the most limiting seasons of the year and may not be used by displaced animals.

The DEIS does not identify mitigation measures capable of offsetting population-level risks if seasonal timing stipulations are waived.

### **Inherent Limitations of Project Modifications**

The project proponent suggests that design refinements, including Alternative D, could result in benefits to bighorn sheep or support herd viability. WY-WSF finds no scientific or biological basis for this conclusion.

Reducing the severity of impacts relative to other project configurations does not constitute a conservation benefit. None of the proposed changes eliminate construction within crucial habitat, avoid prolonged disturbance during sensitive biological periods, or remove long-term risks to a disturbance-sensitive, non-migratory population.

Mitigation measures that attempt to manage impacts after they occur cannot transform a fundamentally incompatible project into one that provides ecological benefit. Conflating impact

reduction with benefit understates the significance of the Project's effects and overstates the effectiveness of proposed mitigation.

### **Broader Wildlife, Recreation, and Access Impacts**

The DEIS identifies substantial recreation losses and access disruptions during the construction period, including displaced hunting seasons, increased traffic, and reduced quality of outdoor experiences. These impacts extend beyond the immediate project area and affect a regional landscape relied upon by hunters, anglers, outfitters, and local communities.

For bighorn sheep and other big game species, increased traffic, noise, dust, and human activity are expected to alter wildlife distribution and reduce habitat effectiveness. These changes affect wildlife populations as well as hunting opportunity and public access to a highly valued bighorn sheep hunting unit.

The Traffic Management Plan focuses primarily on construction logistics and does not adequately address wildlife displacement, cumulative recreation impacts, or public safety. Under NEPA, mitigation must be supported by analysis. Procedural measures alone are insufficient without a clear evaluation of magnitude, duration, and biological consequence.

### **Alternatives and NEPA Compliance**

The alternatives analysis in the DEIS is unduly narrow. NEPA requires agencies to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize environmental harm. The DEIS does not adequately examine alternative siting, configurations, or energy storage options that could meet project objectives while avoiding impacts to bighorn sheep crucial habitat.

Equally important, the DEIS evaluates project feasibility based on assumptions that wildlife timing stipulations and land-use protections will be waived. This is not an appropriate baseline under NEPA. Reasonable alternatives must be evaluated assuming compliance with existing land-use plans, not contingent upon speculative future amendments or variances.

### **Conclusion**

WY-WSF supports responsible energy development when projects are carefully sited, designed to avoid sensitive habitats, and aligned with established land-use and wildlife protections.

As currently proposed, the Seminole Pumped Storage Project does not meet that standard. The DEIS identifies significant, unavoidable population-level risks to the Ferris–Seminole bighorn



sheep herd and relies on assumptions that foundational wildlife protections can be waived to make the Project feasible.

The Ferris–Seminole herd represents a conservation success achieved through decades of public investment, agency coordination, and careful management. Protecting its long-term viability is consistent with state and federal wildlife policy and the public interest.

For these reasons, WY-WSF concludes that:

- **The No-Action Alternative** is the only alternative that fully avoids population-level impacts to the Ferris–Seminole bighorn sheep herd.
- If any action alternative is considered, **all seasonal timing stipulations in the Rawlins RMP must be maintained** without broad or multi-year exceptions.
- Projects that cannot be constructed in compliance with existing land-use plans and wildlife protections **should not proceed where irreplaceable wildlife resources would be compromised**.

WY-WSF appreciates the opportunity to comment and looks forward to continued engagement with the Commission and cooperating agencies.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Cheesbrough  
Executive Director  
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

Bralli Clifford  
President  
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation