



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

Re: Seminole Pumped Storage Project
FERC Project No. 14787-004
Comment Extension on Alternative D

Dear Secretary Reese:

The Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Seminole Pumped Storage Project, including Alternative D and the associated reports.

WY-WSF's mission is to conserve and enhance wild sheep populations, habitat, and hunting opportunity in Wyoming. The Ferris–Seminole bighorn sheep herd is one of Wyoming's most significant conservation successes. It is currently among the state's healthiest herds and functions as the only viable source population for future reintroductions and augmentations. Its biological and strategic importance is statewide.

After reviewing the administrative record and recent filings, WY-WSF opposes licensing of the Project, including Alternative D, under the current record.

I. NEPA Process and Analytical Deficiencies

Alternative D was introduced during the DEIS comment period and materially modifies the Project's configuration, disturbance footprint, and implementation strategy. These changes affect wildlife exposure, construction logistics, and mitigation assumptions.

At present:

- No revised DEIS has been issued incorporating Alternative D.
- No updated Commission wildlife impact analysis has been published.
- Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects under Alternative D have not been evaluated in a consolidated agency document.



NEPA requires informed public participation based on agency analysis. Without a revised DEIS that fully incorporates Alternative D, the record does not allow meaningful evaluation of wildlife impacts or support a defensible licensing decision.

II. Findings Regarding Alternative D

WY-WSF acknowledges that Alternative D reduces haul distance and consolidates certain construction activities. These changes may reduce some traffic exposure compared to Alternative A.

However, Alternative D does not remove the Project from Crucial Winter Range or Parturition habitat. The Upper Reservoir, Main Access Tunnel, Inlet and Outlet facilities, spoil areas, portions of the transmission line, and access routes remain within designated Crucial Winter and Parturition habitat for the Ferris–Seminole herd.

Under Wyoming Game and Fish Department Mitigation Policy, these habitats are classified as Vital because they directly limit wildlife populations. Impacts to Vital habitat may result in significant declines in distribution, abundance, or productivity, and replacement may be difficult or impossible.

Alternative D results in:

- Permanent inundation and removal of Crucial Winter habitat.
- Multi-year industrial disturbance within winter and lambing areas.
- Continued reliance on seasonal timing variances to maintain year-round construction.

Reduction in haul distance does not equate to avoidance of habitat loss or functional impairment.

III. Construction Duration and Seasonal Risk

The Wildlife Seasonal Restriction Variance Plan acknowledges construction may extend from five to seven years. For a non-migratory herd with strong site fidelity, this duration is biologically significant.



Extended disturbance during:

- Crucial Winter Range from November 15 through April 30, and
- Parturition habitat from May 1 through June 30

creates reasonably foreseeable risks, including displacement from high-fidelity winter habitat, increased energetic stress during late winter, reduced recruitment, and increased susceptibility to disease and predation.

The DEIS does not analyze these effects under a realistic multi-year disturbance scenario.

IV. Reliance on Variances Rather Than Avoidance

Alternative D depends on relief from seasonal timing stipulations and Resource Management Plan protections. A configuration that requires multi-year waiver of wildlife protections cannot be characterized as true avoidance or minimization.

A reasonable alternative that complies with existing Crucial Winter and Parturition timing protections has not been fully evaluated. Without such analysis, the Commission cannot meaningfully compare alternatives as required under NEPA.

V. Monitoring and Adaptive Management

WY-WSF supports monitoring and adaptive management in principle. However, the current framework lacks:

- Quantitative displacement thresholds.
- Recruitment or lamb to ewe ratio triggers.
- Habitat functionality performance standards.
- Mandatory operational curtailment criteria.

Monitoring without enforceable biological triggers does not ensure impact reduction. For a herd that serves as Wyoming's primary restoration source population, enforceable safeguards are essential.



VI. Habitat Improvement and Compensatory Mitigation

The proposed habitat improvements may provide incremental benefit over time, but cannot replace permanently inundated Crucial Winter habitat or immediately offset multi-year disturbance in high-fidelity areas.

Compensatory mitigation remains conceptual. Acreage commitments, habitat equivalency metrics, funding assurances, and long-term conservation protections have not been defined. Without specificity, the effectiveness of mitigation cannot be evaluated.

VII. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts

Direct impacts include permanent habitat loss and increased collision risk. Indirect impacts include chronic displacement, energetic stress, and elevated disease vulnerability.

Cumulative impacts include habitat fragmentation, recreational pressure, regional development, invasive species spread, and landscape industrialization.

The DEIS does not provide a complete cumulative effects analysis incorporating Alternative D's revised footprint and construction duration.

VIII. Public Interest Considerations

The Ferris–Seminoe herd represents decades of public investment and collaborative conservation. It supports limited hunting opportunity and is the cornerstone of Wyoming's bighorn restoration strategy.

Permanent loss of Vital habitat and multi-year disturbance to this herd cannot be considered minor or temporary. The current record does not demonstrate that the Project's asserted benefits outweigh the risks to this unique wildlife resource.



IX. Recommended Action

For the reasons stated above, WY-WSF respectfully recommends that the Commission:

- Withdraw the current DEIS and issue a revised DEIS fully incorporating Alternative D.
- Evaluate an alternative that complies with existing Crucial Winter and Parturition timing stipulations.
- Define enforceable biological performance standards for adaptive management.

Until these steps are completed, WY-WSF cannot support Project licensing.

WY-WSF remains committed to constructive engagement and appreciates the Commission's careful consideration of these concerns. Protecting the Ferris–Seminole herd is essential to preserving decades of conservation progress and ensuring the continued success of Wyoming's bighorn sheep restoration efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Cheesbrough".

Katie Cheesbrough
Executive Director
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation