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## 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Martin's Cove historic site is a sheltered location in the Sweetwater Rocks just north of the Sweetwater River approximately 55 miles southwest of Casper, Wyoming (Figure 1.1). In October 1856, Captain Edward Martin's 6<sup>th</sup> Handcart Company--a large group of Mormon converts originating in England who were traveling to the Salt Lake Valley of Utah--took refuge from a winter storm at the site. The Handcart Company had been exposed to winter storms since crossing the North Platte River at Mills, Wyoming, and 145 people died from exposure and starvation between Mills and Salt Lake City. The Martin's Cove historic site is located entirely on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is enrolled as a National Historic Place on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Approximately 140 acres were managed from 1997 to 2002 by the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Corporation) under a cooperative management agreement with the BLM. A 2-mile loop path through the Martin's Cove historic site was developed cooperatively by the Corporation and the BLM. The Corporation provided approximately 5,000 hours of volunteer labor and the BLM contributed approximately \$250,000 in labor and materials. The BLM guided the development from initial planning and design work to final completion. A number of interpretive plaques also have been installed.

In 1996, the Corporation purchased the Sun Ranch, which includes 12,500 deeded acres and adjoins the Martin's Cove historic site, for the express purpose of preserving and facilitating access to this historic site so important to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In addition, grazing permits for 80,000 additional acres were transferred to the Corporation shortly after the purchase of the Sun Ranch. The Corporation uses the Sun Ranch as an interpretive center for the Martin's Cove historic site and as a location for seminars and other activities. These activities include the opportunity for anyone to reenact that portion of the Mormon migration across America by pulling handcarts along the Oregon-Mormon Trail on Sun Ranch property. Handcarts are provided at no charge to anyone wishing to use one. However, visitors do not bring handcarts onto the Martin's Cove lease area. Rather, handcart use is restricted to private property on the Sun Ranch owned by the Corporation.

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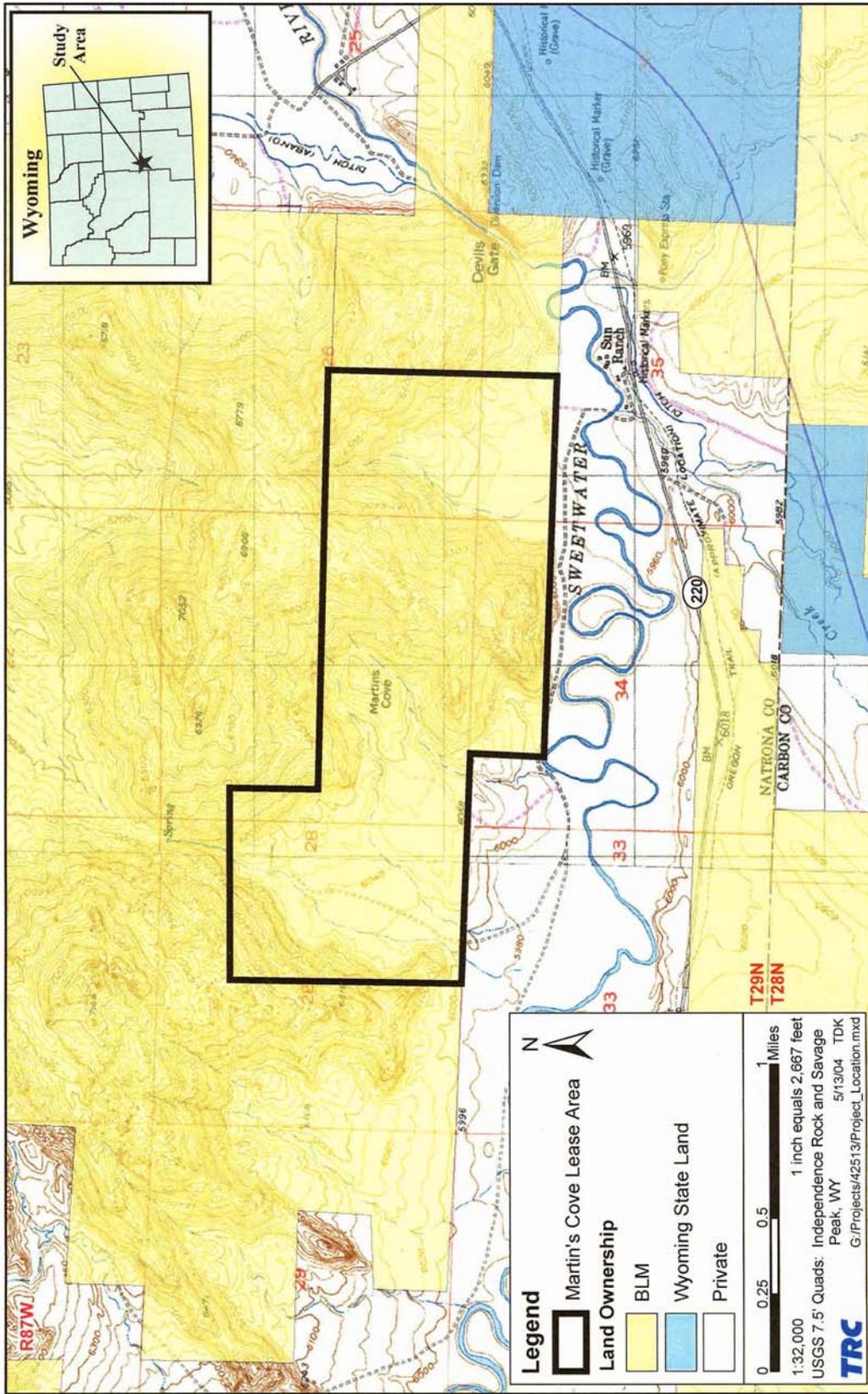


Figure 1.1 Project Location and Project Area.

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In 2001, the Corporation asked the BLM to transfer ownership of the Martin's Cove historic site to the Corporation. At that point, BLM and the Corporation discussed and considered a land exchange under *Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)*. Before this option could be finalized, special legislation was introduced in the United States Congress. The first special legislative proposal was to sell the Martin's Cove site to the Corporation, but this option was ultimately dropped in favor of a lease proposal. On December 1, 2003, President George W. Bush signed *Public Law 108-137--the FY 2004 Energy and Water Appropriations Act (Act)*, a portion of which mandated that BLM enter into a 25-year lease with the Corporation for approximately 940 acres that includes the Martin's Cove historic site (see Figure 1.1 and Appendix A).

## **1.2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

Under the provisions of *Public Law 108-137*, the BLM proposes to issue a lease to the Corporation that authorizes the Corporation to use the Martin's Cove lease area consistent with the provisions stated in the Act. By enacting *Public Law 108-137*, Congress has made the decision that the BLM, on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior (the Department), will issue a lease to the Corporation. The BLM has the responsibility to ensure that the provisions of *Public Law 108-137*, as well as the spirit and intent for which it was enacted, are carried forward in the lease terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will guide the Corporation's use of the public lands delineated in the map included with the Act. The Act states that "The Secretary shall comply with provision of the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (42 *United States Code* [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.) in carrying out this section." It also provides for public access to the Martin's Cove historic site and the trail to Devil's Gate across private land owned by the Corporation to ensure public visitation for historic, educational, and scenic purposes without charge to the public; provides for public educational and ecological preservation of the Martin's Cove historic site without charge to the public; permits the Corporation, in consultation with the BLM, to regulate entry as may be required to protect the environmental and historic values of the resources at the Martin's Cove historic site, or at such times as necessitated by weather conditions, matters of public safety, and night-time hours; provides for the Corporation, upon approval of the BLM, to improve the leasehold as may become necessary from time to time in order to accommodate visitors to the leasehold; provides that the Corporation be obligated to protect and maintain any historical or archaeological artifacts discovered or otherwise identified at the Martin's Cove historic site; and provides that the Corporation may establish, in consultation with BLM, visitation guidelines with respect to such issues as firearms, alcoholic beverages, controlled substances, conduct consistent with the historic nature of the resource, and

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protection of public health and safety. The Act also provides that the Corporation will make lease payments that reflect fair market rental value of the public lands to be leased, provided however, that such lease payments shall be offset by the value of the public easements granted by the Corporation for access to Martin's Cove and Devil's Gate.

A copy of *Public Law 108-137* is included as Appendix A, and a copy of the lease and lease covenant are included as Appendix B.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION**

The purpose and need for the Corporation is to maintain the status quo for protection of and access to the Martin's Cove historic site. The BLM has managed the site in cooperation with the Corporation under a cooperative management agreement (from 1997 to 2002). The purpose and need for the BLM is to comply with *Public Law 108-137*, Section 314--the *FY 2004 Energy and Water Appropriations Act*--signed by President George W. Bush on December 1, 2003. The Act mandates the BLM to lease 940 acres, which includes the Martin's Cove historic site, to the Corporation for a period of 25 years. It also mandates the Secretary of the Interior to "...comply with the provisions of the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*..." This environmental assessment (EA) meets that requirement.

### **1.4 PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION**

In the Act, the Martin's Cove lease area includes approximately 940 acres of federal lands in Natrona County, Wyoming, including portions of Sections 26, 27, 28, 34, and 35 of Township 29 North, Range 87 West (T29N, R87W). Although the precise location of the Martin's Cove historic site is unknown, the leading historical researchers have narrowed the location to the natural coves within the lease area, which was selected so as to encompass the two coves of primary interest. The lease area is undeveloped rangeland just north of the Sweetwater River and includes portions of the granitic Sweetwater Rocks.

### **1.5 CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLANS**

The Martin's Cove lease area is within the Gas Hills Management Unit of the BLM Lander Resource Area and is managed under the Lander Resource Management Plan (RMP). The *Lander Resource Management Plan Record of Decision* (RMP ROD) (BLM 1987) states that "Management actions will

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protect and maintain significant cultural resources located in the Lander Resource Area. The significant resources listed in several management units, including the Oregon/Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails and associated sites ... will receive enhanced protection." Neither of the alternatives considered in detail would be inconsistent with this management direction. Issuance of the lease would ensure public access to historic sites and facilitate interpretation of sites.

The RMP ROD also states that any new oil and gas lease issued for Martin's Cove will have a no surface occupancy restriction; that an additional 680 acres around the Martin's Cove National Register Site, is proposed to be withdrawn under the mining laws; and that significant sites along the Oregon/Mormon Trail be designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Act would be compatible with these three RMP ROD objectives by withdrawing the lease area from mining location and from all forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws, and by other special regulations that would protect the Martin's Cove historical site. These regulations would not create an ACEC *per se*, but would provide protection similar to that provided by an ACEC.

*The Oregon/Mormon Pioneer Trail Management Plan* (Trail Plan) (BLM 1986) focuses on general methods of management that protect and maintain important trail values on BLM-administered lands in Wyoming while allowing for public use and enjoyment. Important segments of the trails and trail-related sites are recommended for special protection, interpretation, use, or other management measures.

## **1.6 RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND/OR OTHER PLANS**

This EA was prepared in accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*, as amended, and is in compliance with all applicable regulations and laws subsequently passed, including Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* (C.F.R.) 1500-1508), U.S. Department of Interior (USDI) requirements (*Department Manual 516, Environmental Quality* [USDI 2004], guidelines in *BLM Manual Handbook, H-1790-1* (BLM 1988), *Guidelines for Assessing and Documenting Cumulative Impacts* (BLM 1994), and CEQ's *Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). This environmental document will serve several purposes: 1) it will provide the public and government agencies with information about potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives; 2) it will identify all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and 3) it will provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project.

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This EA incorporates key provisions of FLPMA to manage public lands and their resource values to "best meet the present and future needs of the American people" (Sec. 103 [43 U.S.C. 1702]) and to coordinate resource management "without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return of greatest unit output" (Sec. 103 [43 U.S.C. 1702]), although FLPMA also says that it is appropriate that some lands be used "for less than all of the resources" (Sec. 103 [43 U.S.C. 1702]).

In November 1978, with passage of an amendment (*Public Law 96-625*) to the *National Trail System Act* (*Public Law 90-543*), the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails were designated as National Historic Trails by Congress. The *National Historic Trails System Act*, as amended, places responsibility for administering the trails with the Secretary of Interior. In April 1983, an interagency agreement between the Rocky Mountain Region of the National Park Service (NPS) and the Wyoming BLM was completed to implement the comprehensive plan for the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail. Specific NPS responsibilities related to BLM management of trails are as follows:

- encourage and assist on the implementation of the recommendations for the trails as identified in the comprehensive plans;
  - encourage and assist BLM to enter into cooperative agreements with state or local agencies, private landowners, and private organizations or individuals for the protection and interpretation of portions of the trails, either within or outside federally-administered areas;
  - review all detailed management and use plans prepared by BLM for sites and segments of the trails to assure they conform generally with the intent of legislation and with concepts and guidelines in the NPS Comprehensive Plans;
  - promulgate and issue regulations that have general application along the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails;
  - encourage, perform, or arrange for historical and archaeological research; and
  - arrange for the availability of maps, reports, books, brochures, and other interpretive publications for distribution at interpretive centers and other visitation points.
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## 1.7 DECISION TO BE MADE

The decision to be made is whether issuance of the lease will result in significant impacts to the human environment and require preparation of an environmental impact statement. If issuance of the lease will not result in significant impacts, the Decision Record for this EA will be accompanied by a Finding of No Significant Impact and the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) process will be satisfied. The Decision Record will not decide whether or not the lease will be issued. That decision has already been made as a result of the passage of *Public Law 108-137*.

## 1.8 SCOPING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ISSUES

Internal scoping was conducted by the BLM in April and May of 2004. Of the 14 critical elements of the human environment that must be addressed in an EA (BLM 1988; 1999), 12 (areas of critical environmental concern, solid and hazardous wastes, air quality, threatened and endangered species, floodplains, water quality, environmental justice, prime farmlands, wetlands/riparian areas, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, and invasive, non-native species) would not be affected by the Proposed Action, whereas two (cultural/historical resources and Native American religious concerns) are analyzed in detail in this EA (Table 1.1).

A public scoping notice was mailed on May 14, 2004, to 32 governmental agencies, elected officials, tribal councils and organizations, media outlets, other organizations, and public land users for a 30-day comment period (Appendix C). A public scoping meeting was held in Casper on May 27, 2004. Approximately 25 members of the public attended, as well as media representatives.

Seventy-four comment letters were received in response to the public scoping notice. Comments were received from 66 individuals, one elected official, one government agency, and six organizations. The BLM interdisciplinary team summarized scoping comments into 25 issues and concerns and arranged them within resource area categories in order of the frequency with which the comments were made. These comments, the responses to the comments, and the location within this EA where the comment is discussed, follows.

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Table 1.1 Potential Impacts to Critical Elements of the Human Environment<sup>1</sup> and Other Resources as a Result of the Proposed Action.

Critical Element	Potential Impact as a Result of the Proposed Action
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern <sup>2</sup>	None present.
Wastes, Solid and Hazardous <sup>2</sup>	Not affected; no solid or hazardous wastes are proposed for use or would be generated.
Native American Religious Concerns <sup>2</sup>	Potentially affected and analyzed in this EA.
Air Quality <sup>2</sup>	Not affected; no activities that would affect air quality are proposed.
Threatened and Endangered Species <sup>2</sup>	None present (see USFWS letter, Appendix D). No bald eagle nests or roosts, no prairie dog towns, and no habitat suitable for Ute ladies'-tresses occur in the project area, and no surface water depletions to the North Platte River would occur as a result of project-related activities.
Floodplains <sup>2</sup>	None present.
Cultural/Historic Resources <sup>2</sup>	Potentially affected and analyzed in this EA.
Water Quality, Surface and Ground <sup>2</sup>	Not affected; no actions affecting surface or ground waters are proposed.
Environmental Justice <sup>2</sup>	No minority or low income populations would be disproportionately affected by the Proposed Action.
Farmland, Prime or Unique <sup>2</sup>	None present.
Wetlands/Riparian Areas <sup>2</sup>	None present.
Wild and Scenic Rivers <sup>2</sup>	None present.
Wilderness <sup>2</sup>	None present.
Invasive, Non-native Species <sup>2</sup>	Not affected; no actions would contribute to the introduction or spread of invasive, non-native species.
Vegetation	Not affected; no surface disturbance would occur.
Wildlife Resources	Not affected. Pedestrian traffic only would be allowed on, and restricted to, the trails to Martin's Cove, as has been the case for several past years. Portions of the lease area provide winter/yearlong and crucial winter/yearlong range for both pronghorn and mule deer. Visitation to Martin's Cove would occur primarily from late spring to early fall--especially during times when schools are not in session--and visitation would be very low during big game crucial winter periods. Other wildlife species occurring on the lease area would be minimally disturbed, as in the past, by pedestrian traffic restricted to trails. No raptor nests are known to occur on the lease area.
Soils	Not affected; no surface disturbance would occur.
Land Use	Potentially affected and analyzed in this EA.
Socioeconomics	Although some economic benefits are likely to accrue to local communities, such benefits likely would be localized and low (National Park Service 1999). Economic benefits to local communities related to Martin's Cove likely would be the result of the Corporation's development on the Sun Ranch and the Church-related activities that occur on the Sun Ranch. Facilities on the Sun Ranch would operate whether the Martin's Cove property was leased to the Corporation or not.
Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	Not affected; no surface disturbance would occur.

<sup>1</sup> From BLM (1988; 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Critical elements of the human environment.

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**General Issues and Concerns**

***Comment:** If this lease is granted, other public lands users or tribal groups should be granted similar 25-year leases.*

**Response:** The BLM will respond in the same way to any future legislation calling for similar leasing to any other group. We could also consider an application for a lease under the *Recreation and Public Purposes Act* if submitted by any other group. This issue is not discussed further in the EA.

***Comment:** Expresses general support for the proposed lease, and endorses the concept of the church as stewards of the site.*

**Response:** Thank you for your comment.

***Comment:** The size of the proposed lease is larger than the area of the Cove site.*

**Response:** The area to be leased is specified in *Public Law 108-137*. The lease area was designated so as to encompass the two natural coves that historical researchers have identified for the historical event. This relates to the concern that the exact site of the historic event is not known with certainty (see Issues Related to Cultural/Historic Resources, below). This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 1.1.

***Comment:** Public Law 108-137 grants BLM the discretionary authority to decide whether or not to issue a lease.*

**Response:** *Public Law 108-137* directs BLM to issue to the Corporation a lease for a 25-year period subject to a number of conditions listed in the Act including providing for public access across their private lands to the Martin's Cove historic site under a lease covenant. It is BLM's position that issuing a 25-year lease is non-discretionary as long as the Corporation complies with all the terms and conditions contained in *Public Law 108-137*. In the unlikely event that the Corporation fails to comply with all of the conditions contained in *Public Law 108-137*, BLM has the discretion to not issue a lease to Martin's Cove until all of the conditions contained in *Public Law 108-137* are satisfied. This issue is discussed in the EA in Sections 1.1 and 1.7.

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**Issues and Concerns Related to Cultural/Historic Resources**

**Comment:** *General objection to leasing of National Register sites to private or religious interests.*

**Response:** The NRHP accepts nominations for federal, state, and private properties. Placement on the Register does not make a site unavailable for lease (e.g., Yellowstone Lodge). The *National Historic Preservation Act* (NHPA) encourages the adaptive use of historic sites. Finally, *Public Law 108-137* specifically mandates leasing of the site. This issue is not discussed further in the EA.

**Comment:** *Interpretation of the site should not be exclusive to church history. Granting the lease ignores the fact that there were other pioneers on the trail, as well as Native American use. It is not exclusively a "Mormon" trail.*

**Response:** The BLM currently operates the nearby Devil's Gate Interpretive Site, which provides interpretation of other non-church historic events, such as Sun Ranch, Devil's Gate, and the Emigrant Trail. We will review the site for possible additional interpretation, as allowed by workload and budget. Other sites that provide interpretation of non-church historic events include BLM's Split Rock interpretive site, the National Trails Center in Casper, and the State of Wyoming's Independence Rock site.

Some comments called for additional interpretation at the nearby Visitors Center operated by the church. This center is a private facility on private land, and as such the BLM has no authority to regulate the activities conducted there. This issue is not discussed further in the EA.

**Comment:** *The exact location of the historical event is not known with certainty. This should be resolved before a lease is issued.*

**Response:** The primary historical researchers have narrowed the potential site to the natural coves within the lease area, which was selected so as to encompass the two coves of primary interest. (See also the issue related to the size of the lease, described above.) This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 1.4.

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**Comment:** *Protection of all cultural resources should be ensured. Artifacts should remain in public ownership. Discoveries should be evaluated using standard archaeological methodology.*

**Response:** A cultural resources inventory has been conducted of the lease area by the Office of the Wyoming State Archaeologist pursuant to the requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA. All artifacts from the lease area have been properly curated and will be retained as government property. Any future discoveries would be subject to Section 106 of the NHPA. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has been recognized as a consulting party, along with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 4.2.1.1.

**Comment:** *BLM should meet its obligations under Section 106 in the leasing process.*

**Response:** The Section 106 process and tribal consultation process have been followed in the consideration of the lease. Please see the response to the previous comment.

### **Issues and Concerns Related to Range**

**Comment:** *The lease should not result in an increase in permitted cattle grazing at the site.*

**Response:** When the trail to the Martin's Cove historic site was constructed, a fence was built to exclude livestock from the lease area to protect the historic site, the trail, and other improvements. Exclusion of livestock from the lease area will continue. No increase in grazing will be permitted. This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 4.2.2.1.

### **Issues and Concerns Related to Realty**

**Comment:** *Granting the lease would set a precedent for other leases or disposal actions.*

**Response:** *Public Law 108-137* specifically states that no precedent is to be implied by the Act. The BLM would respond to any future similar legislation for any other group in the manner specified in that

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legislation. We would also, under existing law and policy, be required to consider any Recreation and Public Purposes application for a similar lease submitted by any other group. This issue is not discussed further in the EA.

*Comment: General objection to the leasing of any public lands to a private or religious interest.*

**Response:** FLPMA, the *Recreation and Public Purposes Act*, and other acts provide for the leasing of public lands to private entities. This lease is specifically mandated by *Public Law 108-137*. This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 1.1.

*Comment: How will fair market value for the lease be determined? Appraisal as grazing land does not reflect true value as a historic site.*

**Response:** "Fair Market Value" is a legally-defined term which we cannot arbitrarily change. Value will be based on similar market sales (e.g., Sun Ranch). The value of Martin's Cove as a historic property is not a market-recognized value. This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 4.2.2.1.

*Comment: The right of first refusal constitutes a de facto sale. A thorough review should be conducted at each renewal.*

**Response:** The right of first refusal is specified in *Public Law 108-137*. Each lease renewal will be a new decision point, with analysis and public participation. This issue is not discussed further in the EA.

*Comment: The term of the lease is too long.*

**Response:** The lease term is mandated by *Public Law 108-137*. This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 1.1.

### **Issues and Concerns Related to Recreation**

*Comment: Public access should be ensured; terms of access should be defined.*

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**Response:** *Public Law 108-137* specifies that public access is to be ensured. Any lease to the Corporation will remain in effect as long as a lease covenant providing for public access remains in effect. Stated another way, if, for any reason, the Corporation cancels the lease covenant at some future time, any lease issued under *Public Law 108-137* automatically terminates. *Public Law 108-137* and the actual lease covenant document (see Appendix B) define the terms of access. Although *Public Law 108-137* states that the Corporation may establish additional visitation guidelines in consultation with the BLM, the Corporation has not proposed to do so at this time.

Certain regulations regarding visitation to public lands in general and developed recreation sites, in particular, would remain in effect. These include the following.

Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Designations: The overall ORV designation for the region is *Limited to Existing Roads and Vehicle Routes*.

Firearms: 43 C.F.R. Part 8365.2-5. On developed recreation sites, no person shall (a) discharge or use firearms, other weapons, or fireworks.

Alcoholic Beverages and Controlled Substances: Controlled substances are not allowed. 43 C.F.R. Part 8365.1-4 Public Health, Safety and Comfort (b) No person shall engage in the following activities in the public lands: (2) Possessing a controlled substance ... There are qualifications here, but only if the substance is allowed by state law and in use through a valid prescription. Substances such as marijuana are clearly illegal. Alcoholic beverages are not illegal on public lands but laws pertaining to drinking and driving would apply.

Public Health and Safety: BLM has broad authority to address health and safety issues. 43 C.F.R. Part 8365.1-4 and 1-5 cover public health and safety. These regulations pertain to public disturbances; unreasonable noise; creating hazards or nuisances; resisting arrest; assaulting or committing battery on others; defacing property, cultural, or natural resources; or using explosives, among others. 43 C.F.R. Part 8365.1-6 gives the State Director the authority to issue any "Supplementary Rules" deemed necessary, in addition to those listed above.

**Comment:** *General concern regarding future development of the site. Improvements should be evaluated and approved by BLM / independent persons.*

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**Response:** The church has not proposed any permanent improvements at this time on the proposed lease. Under *Public Law 108-137*, BLM must approve any improvements. This would require another decision, another NEPA process, and another round of public comment. This issue is discussed in the EA in Sections 2.3.1 and 4.2.2.1.

*Comment: Concerns regarding the use of improvements to facilitate/increase handcart trekking.*

**Response:** No improvements are planned at the site and any proposed improvements would require BLM approval and another decision point. The Martin's Cove site is not on the handcart trekking route and the Cove is not used for trekking. This issue is discussed in the EA in Sections 1.1 and 3.4.

*Comment: Concerns regarding the number of visitors causing impacts to the Cove, Trail, Devil's Gate, or Independence Rock.*

**Response:** The level of use at these sites is expected to be the same or nearly the same under all alternatives. No increase in visitor use is anticipated solely as a result of granting the lease. The impacts of visitor use, in general, at the site are discussed in the EA in Section 4.2.2.1.

*Comment: The lease would ensure continued public access to Martin's Cove and Devil's Gate.*

**Response:** The lease provides for reciprocal public access to these sites that cannot be guaranteed under existing land ownership patterns. This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 4.2.2.1.

### **Issues and Concerns Related to Socioeconomics**

*Comment: Tourism related to the site benefits the state and local economies.*

**Response:** No increase in tourism is anticipated solely as a result of granting the lease. The general economic impacts of tourism related to Martin's Cove are discussed in Table 1.1.

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**Issues and Concerns Related to Wilderness**

*Comment:* Concerns regarding the potential for impacts to the Sweetwater Rocks Wilderness Study Area (WSA). No additional vehicle access to the WSA should be allowed.

**Response:** The church has not proposed any use of the WSA, including vehicular use. There is no established vehicular access to the WSA from the proposed lease area. Visitors to the site do not use motorized vehicles. This issue is discussed in the EA in Section 4.2.2.1.

**Issues and Concerns Related to Wildlife**

*Comment:* Increased use of Martin's Cove could possibly cause displacement of wintering mule deer and antelope from crucial winter range.

**Response:** The vast majority of use occurs in the summer; there is very little visitor use of the site during the crucial wintering time. This issue is discussed in the EA in Table 1.1.

*Comment:* Development of the site could reduce the value of big game winter habitat and cause fragmentation of continuous sagebrush stands.

**Response:** No development at the site has been proposed or is anticipated. Any future development would require BLM approval, with another decision point and NEPA analysis. This issue is discussed in the EA in Sections 2.3.1 and 4.2.2.1.

As a result of internal BLM scoping and public scoping comments, Native American religious concerns, cultural/historical resources, and land use are analyzed in detail in this EA.

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