

How to be a Good Neighbor and what to do when things go south . . .

Lucy Pauley

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In Wyoming, the closest neighbor might be right across the street or 10 miles down the road.

In small-acreage subdivisions, a property line is probably shared with a neighbor or two. The same roads are driven on, and children attend the same schools.

Maintaining a good relationship with a neighbor is important. The Mediation Program receives calls from people seeking help with situations involving neighbors. In most cases, communication breaks down, and the neighbors are not talking to each other. Our job is to bring the parties to the table and facilitate a conversation to help them resolve their problem.

Relationships with a neighbor can be tricky, but there are a few strategies to help maintain a good association with the folks next door.

In researching this article, I talked to several co-workers and friends who live on small acreages and asked their ideas on the keys to being a good neighbor. I also looked at previous mediation cases and developed five strategies.

1. **Fix your fences.** The old adage that “good fences make good neighbors” is probably truer in rural areas than anywhere. Many problems are avoided by making sure fences are sturdy and animals on either side can’t get out or in. If moving into a new development, a first chance to meet neighbors might be when it’s time to put up that fence and decide if costs are shared. This is a great opportunity to establish good lines of communication and an effective working relationship.

2. **Control weeds.** Spending time and money keeping Russian thistle, knapweed, and other weeds off property only to turn around the next summer and find it has spread from the field next door is very frustrating. If the weed problem is widespread, invite

neighbors to work together to eradicate the invasive species. A local weed and pest control district office or University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES)

office can provide information to help identify problem weeds and offer suggestions for fixing the problem.

3. **Don’t let Fido run wild.** Keep dogs and other pets under control and out of a neighbor’s rabbit house or chicken coop. If you live near a ranch, ensure dogs don’t bother livestock. Keep livestock healthy; vaccinations will help prevent the spread of disease and keep all of the neighborhood’s animals healthy.

4. **Obey the rules.** Keep property neat;

don’t give neighbors a reason to complain. Work with a homeowner’s association (HOA) or

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photo of spotted knapweed by Amy Jerup, Teton Co. Weed & Pest



photo by Lyndsay Griffin



How to Prepare for Mediation

A few minutes of planning can help make the mediation session productive and successful

Lucy Pauley

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process where a neutral third party the mediator, facilitates with the disputing parties to help them reach a mutually-agreed upon solution. Mediation through the Wyoming Agriculture & Natural Resource Mediation Program is an effective tool to help agricultural producers and natural resource managers make wise decisions in a voluntary, confidential, low-cost and time-saving way.

The following steps are guidelines to help you achieve successful results through mediation.

Step 1: Understand the process

The mediator will start the meeting by laying out the ground rules and answer your questions. Next, both parties will be given the opportunity to talk about the situation as they see it. After everyone has told their side of the story, the mediator will help identify the main issues and both parties will start exploring options for resolving the conflict. As the options are discussed, the mediator will ensure that any solutions developed are agreed upon by both parties.

Step 2: Review your goals and interests – and those of the other parties

It is important to remember the reason(s) why you sought mediation. Knowing where you are, the points you want to make and familiarizing yourself with the other party's concerns helps you to ef-

fectively articulate your position and be open to communication.

If you are involved in a complex issue, you might need to understand your legal rights and obligations in order to fully assess your current position. In these situations, you should consult with your attorney before you meet with the mediator. Sometimes, it is beneficial for your attorney to attend the mediation.

The mediation program will help you identify documentation that will be helpful, but some examples include: photographs of the area in dispute, maps, correspondence related to the conflict, receipts, repair estimates, and program rules or statutes related to your dispute.

Step 3: Clearly identify and summarize all of the main issues in the dispute

Make a written list of what you consider to be the critical issues. This will allow you to focus on the negotiation of those issues and assist in your objective evaluation of the case. Then, try evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your case from an objective perspective.

Step 4: Develop a negotiation strategy

Keep in mind that the key to a great resolution is a “win/win” mentality, one where both parties are working to achieve a favorable outcome. Be

prepared to consider openly all of the options that you are confronted with and to generate as many of your own as you can. The more options there are, the more flexibility you have in finding the best resolution to your problem.

Step 5: Reaching agreement or impasse

After the issues have been addressed and negotiations completed, the parties will either be able to reach an agreement or reach an impasse. Once the parties have reached an agreement, the mediator will help you discuss and agree upon the implementation of the settlement, the timetable and the reporting that will occur in the future (if any). Depending on the situation, the mediator might also help you draft a written settlement agreement at the mediation so that all parties have a hard copy of the resolution.

If a solution is not reached, the mediator might suggest that the process reconvene at a later time. In some cases, the parties need time to research other options and determine the feasibility of potential solutions. We hope that this information may be useful in helping you to prepare for the mediation process. For questions or more information, contact Lucy at (307) 777-8788 or 1-888-996-9278. ●

What's Being Done about Brucellosis?

Eric Keszler

Brucellosis is a highly contagious bacterial disease of both animals and humans. A cooperative state-federal brucellosis eradication program has existed for more than 70 years, because of the disease's economic impact on cattle ranchers and because it can be a serious human disease. This program has nearly eliminated brucellosis in domestic livestock across the country, but the disease still exists in free-ranging elk and bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area. Brucellosis is not found in wildlife anywhere else in Wyoming.

Brucellosis infection of the female reproductive tract results in abortion. A cow usually aborts her first calf following infection; a few cows will abort their second, or even third. Fetuses delivered near term often are stillborn or fail to thrive due to overwhelming infection.

Brucellosis can be transmitted among elk, bison, and cattle. Because of this, cattle producers in the region have to deal with increased testing, vaccination, and costs of managing their livestock in a manner that avoids commingling with and possible infection from wildlife. If transmission occurs, the owner of the infected stock has to quarantine exposed animals and may have to slaughter the entire herd.

Managing brucellosis in elk and bison of the greater Yellowstone area is one of the most complicated and contentious wildlife man-



photo credit: Mark Gocke, WGFD



photo credit: Mark Gocke, WGFD

agement issues in North America. Often called a "political disease," brucellosis leads to social, economic, biological, and political complications that are a constant challenge for wildlife and livestock officials.

In 2004, Governor Dave Freudenthal formed the Wyoming Brucellosis Coordination Team,

which presented twenty-eight recommendations to the governor and Wyoming state legislature to combat brucellosis in Wyoming. Based on those recommendations, more is being done about brucellosis in Wyoming than ever before. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and other government agencies, private-sector organizations, and individuals are building an aggressive program of vaccination, research, habitat improvement, and more. Following are updates on just a few of those efforts:

Cattle Herd Management Plans

Each livestock producer in the Yellowstone region is being encouraged to develop a plan for managing his herd in cooperation with the Wyoming Livestock Board, State Veterinary Laboratory, and USDA

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). These plans are intended to minimize the possibility of brucellosis transmission from wildlife to livestock.

Test-and-Removal Program

The Game and Fish is overseeing an experimental five-year study involving the Pinedale elk herd in the southern Wind River Range. In this experiment, cow elk that visit feedgrounds are being tested for brucellosis, and any animals that test positive are removed and killed. The meat is then donated to food banks across the state.

Mediation, Cooperative Extension and the Human Connection

Raina Spence

“Technique is communication: the two words are synonymous in conductors.”

Leonard Bernstein

“A man has a property in his opinions and the free communication of them.”

James Madison

The concept of a Cooperative Extension Service was born well over a century ago when horses carried the mail, doctors would treat you in exchange for a chicken, and plagues of locust devoured gardens. In the days of our grandparents and great-grandparents, when they wanted to know what to feed their daughter’s pet guinea pig, what kind of curry comb was best to use on their horse, or what the stocking rate was for a new piece of land they purchased, the advice and expertise of an extension agent was often sought. Times have changed. Now when folks have such questions, they often can be found in seconds with a few swift keystrokes.

As the Wyoming State Master Gardener Coordinator, my role reflects the change in the way information is disseminated. If you want to know what you can grow in your backyard at 7,200 feet in Wyoming, you can quickly access such information by perusing the University of Wyoming’s collection of bulletins. A visit to your local extension office is no longer a necessity. My job requires less time to be spent on such sharing of information than it would have a generation ago.

There are, however, certain skills that no amount of time spent browsing Wikipedia can impart. Can Google truly help mend hurt feelings between two volunteers? Can we learn to communicate with each other through read-only PDFs? The pro-

The next Mediation Workshop is scheduled for June 1-4, 2009 in Casper. For more information, contact Lucy Pauley at (307) 777-8788 or lpaule@state.wy.us.

spect seems unlikely. This is a very interesting time to be involved in the Cooperative Extension Service, because whereas in the past we could define our goals as communicating information TO the public, we are presently finding ourselves in need of communicating WITH the public. All too often we find our training in communication favors the former method and we are ill equipped for the latter. One of the most fulfilling things about receiving formal training in the art and science of mediation is an appreciation of the importance of a human presence in facilitating communication. This became readily apparent in my first “real” mediation. Both parties had sought legal council. Both parties were well versed in farming. Both parties had concerns and problems that could only be solved by gaining a better understanding of how to communicate effectively when in conflict.

You can Google “mediation” and get over 18 million hits, but still be unable to move past the conflict in which you find yourself entrenched. The power of mediation lies in the ability of person to validate the worth of another by allowing their voice to be heard. This critical, but often overlooked, concept proves essential with managing volunteers, collaborating with colleagues, and even interacting with members of our own social circles. My dealings with conflict within the Master Gardener program became more constructive since taking the mediation course. Even asking simple questions such as “What does a good solution look like to you?” can dissipate a caller’s anger and move the conversation toward a more constructive path. While I do not often find the need to conduct a formal mediation session in my day to day tasks, I am often presented with representative disagreements. Understanding how to best approach differences in needs, values, and resources, and having the tools to invite a constructive dialogue is both invaluable and timeless. These human interaction skills can never to be replaced by any level of technology and thus I encourage your participation in a mediation course. ●

Raina Spence is the State Master Gardener Coordinator and she completed the basic mediation workshop in summer 2008. Raina can be reached at (307) 766-2076 or by email at rspence@uwyo.

Mediation IDEAs is a publication of the Wyoming Agriculture & Natural Resource Mediation Program. For more information on mediation or to obtain this publication in an electronic format, please contact Lucy Pauley at (307) 777-8788 or lpaule@state.wy.us.

Interest-Based Negotiation Training Offered

The Center for Resolution and the Wyoming Agriculture & Natural Resource Mediation Program are co-sponsoring “Skillfull Bargaining: Understanding Interest-Based Negotiation,” a two day workshop to be held on May 5 & 6 in Casper, WY. This interactive training program blends lecture, role-play, and discussion and features the experience of professional negotiator Stan Sitnick. Stan has 20+ years of negotiation experience as an attorney and 15 years as a mediator. He teaches in the Graduate Program in

Conflict Resolution at Portland State University and maintains a private practice as a mediator, facilitator and trainer in a wide variety of contexts, including workplace, community, family, school, public policy and civil litigation. Stan has trained thousands of people in negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution skills.

Participants will learn and discuss a variety of topics including the role of negotiation and conflict, Communication skills

and tools, understanding interests and alternatives, the process of negotiation and working with strong emotions.

The workshop is open to the public. Registration for the 2-day class is \$275 or \$290 (after April 1). If you need more information or would like to register for the class contact Barbara Hauge at (307) 734-6620 or Lucy Pauley at (307) 777-8788. ●

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county government and learn about the covenants and zoning for the neighborhood. If the HOA meets regularly, attend the meetings. If living in a subdivision with livestock, pay close attention to livestock numbers and overgrazing restrictions.

5. Help each other out. If a neighbor is working on a tough project and there are a few hours to spare, lend a hand. You might need help later in the year. Small efforts now may pay off in better relationships with neighbors in the future.

A situation might arise in which you’ve tried to be a good neighbor but personality conflicts or other factors have resulted in a clash. The situation is resolvable but where to start? If you are in a conflict, there are several steps to get the situation resolved.

First, don’t let the situation fester. Call the neighbor and set up a meeting. Suggest a convenient time and location. Before the meeting, take a few minutes to think about what to say. Try to look at the problem objectively and jot down possible solutions. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, written by Roger Fisher and William Ury, helps develop a strategy based on the four principles of integrated negotiation: separate the people from the problem, focus on interests not positions, invent options for mutual gain, and insist on using objective criteria.

During the meeting, try to keep an open mind. Listen to what the neighbor is saying and determine if there is common ground you both can agree upon. If the discussion is becoming too heated, take a break for a few

minutes. Give each other time to talk, and ask questions if more information is needed. Brainstorm several solutions, and then decide together how to evaluate potential solutions. Once a solution is decided upon, be specific about the terms of the agreement, who will be responsible for what, and any timelines that need to be included. The Wyoming Agriculture and Natural Resource Mediation Program can also provide more information on negotiation skills.

Relationships take time to grow; they don’t happen overnight. You don’t have to be friends with someone just because a fence line is shared, but a good working relationship might make life a little easier. ●

So, a conversation with a neighbor has left a situation unresolved. What’s next? Consider contacting the Wyoming Agriculture and Natural Resource Mediation Program. Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process. You and your neighbor will meet with a mediator and discuss the situation. The mediator will help look at the issues and help develop a solution satisfactory for both. The mediation program has trained, certified mediators available statewide.

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During the first two years of this program, test-and-removal operations were conducted at the Muddy Creek feedground. In 2008, the Game and Fish expanded the project to include the nearby Fall Creek feedground. And in 2009, the department will expand the project again to include the Scab Creek feedground.

Over the first three years of the program, 1053 elk were trapped. Of those, 582 were tested for brucellosis, and 112 of those tested positive and were killed. This resulted in almost 22,500 pounds of meat distributed free to the public.

At the end of this program, researchers will be able to determine if the test-and-removal approach is feasible in reducing rates of brucellosis infection in elk

on western Wyoming's feedgrounds. The experiment will be evaluated by monitoring change in brucellosis prevalence on the feedground. The scientific community will also critically review the experiment.

Brucellosis Management Action Plans

The Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team also recommended the development of brucellosis management action plans for seven feedground elk herd units and one bison herd unit in northwestern Wyoming. These plans were completed in spring of 2008.

Each plan considers a variety of ways to avoid mixing livestock and elk during the winter and to reduce the prevalence of the disease. These include altering feedground operations, reducing numbers of elk, changing the way cattle producers

operate, installing fences, testing elk for brucellosis and removing infected animals, enhancing elk habitat, and buying winter range or conservation easements on winter range.

Many other efforts are being undertaken by agencies, organizations, and individuals with the goal of eliminating brucellosis in wildlife and in livestock. Because brucellosis is such a complicated issue, it will take a coordinated, multi-faceted effort to find a solution. For more information on brucellosis in Wyoming, visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department website at <http://gf.state.wy.us>. ●

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AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

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The Wyoming Agricultural and Natural Resource Mediation Program seeks to encourage the use of mediation, technical review teams and other community/shared decision making processes to help people impacted by agricultural, natural resource, and related conflicts to find mutually agreeable solutions.

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