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The Corner Post

Summer/Fall 2019

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture Natural Resources & Policy Division Newsletter

Wyoming Agriculture

WY. Dept. of Agriculture
Natural Resources & Policy Division
2219 Carey Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002-0100

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"The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of liberty.
-Abraham Lincoln

*Cover photo courtesy of Justin Williams

WAY BEYOND WORDS

Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst

Trying to explain to someone what a policy analyst does for the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) is difficult to say the least. One thing is certain: we read hundreds of pages of documents and make lots of edits in bright red ink. While it's important to understand the semantics of wording and sentences and how these may negatively impact federal lands grazing permittees, it's just as important for us to get out on the ground and see the allotment in person.

When we review the permit renewal documents, the handful of pictures included in the Environmental Assessment doesn't provide the context to understand the resource concerns, and possible contributing factors for the area not meeting desired conditions or standards. Previous disturbances such as wildfire or oil and gas development, geology, snow pack, wind, or even recreation use are all considerations when looking at areas where resource conditions need improving.

Seeing the resources is incredibly valuable, but the highlight of participating in monitoring and field visits, is the opportunity to meet agency staff and grazing permittees face-to-face. It's difficult to build the relationship over the phone or through an e-mail. Riding on a horse or in an ATV provides great opportunity for valuable conversations. It's these conversations where our presence, actions, or questions provide a clearer picture of what a policy analyst with WDA does for our clients, the livestock grazing producers and permittees. We would offer for any of the agency staff and mostlimportantly the federal lands grazing permittees we represent, to include us in future monitoring days and field visits. +

Look for the Natural Resources Division on the internet: http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp

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GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY = GOOD NEWS

Good News: The Wyoming Department of Agriculture has received a completed Master Agreement for Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) with the U.S. Forest Service for both Region 2 (Pacific Northwest Region) and Region 4 (Intermountain Region), covering all forests in Wyoming.

The GNA is a cooperative agreement or contract which allows the State to perform watershed and rangeland restoration and management services on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Congress passed this law expanding GNA for 2014 Appropriations Act and the 2016 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill permanently authorizes the GNA for both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) extending it to all 50 States and Puerto Rico. It includes construction, reconstruction, repair, or restoration of paved or permanent roads or parking areas and construction, alteration, repair, or replacement of public buildings or works as well as projects in wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and lands where removal of vegetation is prohibited or restricted. The 2016 Appropriations Act included a five-year authorization for the use of GNA in all states with NFS lands to perform watershed and rangeland restoration and protection services on NFS and BLM lands when similar and complementary services are performed by the state on adjacent state or private lands.

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"Sit tall in the saddle, hold your head up high. Keep your eye fixed where the trail meets the sky. Live life you ain't afraid to die. Don't be scared, just enjoy the ride."
–Chris LeDoux

Sage-Grouse UPDATE

Chris Wichmann, *Manager*

Like the soap opera 'As the World Turns," the sage grouse saga continues to turn for the state of Wyoming. Approximately 3-months ago the BLM Washington DC Office released a Clarification Document called the Clarification of the Relationship between the Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Objectives, Rangeland Health Standards and Evaluations, and Use Authorizations Including Grazing Permit Renewals. This Document further clarifies the sage grouse habitat objectives table in the Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments (ARMPA) or what most people know as Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 has brought more concerns and issues to the agriculture industry than any other item in the ARMPA. Table 2.2 identifies various habitat objectives for grass height, % cover and other objectives to benefit sage grouse at different times of year. However, Table 2.2 continuously is being misinterpreted as requirements. The Clarification Document does a very good job clarifying the following:

- Inform the suitability of seasonal habitats – Meaning the habitat objectives table only informs the rating of suitability of the seasonal habitat and does not require any of the single objectives to be met. Informs the suitability rating is the key.
- No reliance on a single indicator – Meaning that the 7" objective is not looked at as a requirement, but should be looked at in combination with numerous other items to assess a rating.

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