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

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## Quotable Quotes

*"We relax at the ranch, which if not heaven itself, probably has the same zip code."*
*-Ronald Reagan*

# Finding a Happy Medium

## *Grazing Livestock in Sage-grouse Habitat*

Justin Williams, Ag Program Coordinator

Environmental groups believe removal of livestock grazing in sage-grouse habitat is a necessity to bring the bird's population back to historical numbers and rangelands back to their natural state. As new research projects are funded and data is collected, we are finding out new information every day. We can all agree overgrazing by livestock, wildlife or even wild horses is not only bad for sage-grouse, but is also bad for the range and ultimately, bad for a rancher's bottom line. The less robust the vegetation the less pounds of gain can be expected for livestock during the peak grazing period.

The long awaited, cooperatively written and peer reviewed document titled *Grazing Influence, Management and Objective Development in Wyoming's Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat—With Emphasis on Nesting and Brood Rearing* is soon available. This document provides information on how to use livestock grazing as a management tool on rangelands, which can improve range conditions for both livestock and sage-grouse. As indicated earlier, many believe by removing livestock the rangelands simply return to a natural bunchgrass/sagebrush mix. The research indicates careful management and monitoring is required to keep the rangelands in this state; If an area is a bare ground/sagebrush site, many anti-livestock grazing individuals again believe, the removal of livestock simply returns the site automatically back to a bunchgrass/sagebrush mixed site. Instead, research using exclosures, indicates additional treatments are necessary. It is also proven that treatments such as chemical or fire to remove sagebrush, can take years to regenerate suitable sagebrush habitat vital for sage-grouse. While an area completely void of sagebrush is ideal for livestock grazing, it may not be compatible for sage-grouse. In a time where listing a species such as sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act, "finding a happy medium" is often times the best compromise and solution to ranchers and range managers across the West.

The document is nearing final stages of completion and publication. We invite anyone in the livestock industry and range management to download a copy of the document for new ideas and future reference. The document will be available on the Wyoming Department of Agriculture website at: http://wyagric.state.wy.us/, the Wyoming Game and Fish website at: http://gf.state.wy.us/, as well as at the university as a University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension publication at: http://ces.uwyo.edu/.

# Learning About Trichomoniasis .....in Wyoming

Larry Bentley, Natural Resource and Policy Consultant

*Tritrichomonas foetus* or Trichomoniasisis is a tiny protozoan parasite that lives in the reproductive tract of cattle worldwide. To be labeled a parasite, an organism must be detrimental to its host animal and survive in or on the animal for a long period of time. The parasite lives in either the penal sheath of bulls or the reproductive tract of cows. Trichomoniasis causes abortions in pregnant cattle.

Trichomoniasis is spread by an infected bull depositing the parasite in the reproductive organs of a cow while breeding. The infected cow then transmits the parasite to other bulls during her first ovulation, after aborting the fetus. Cows may remain infected for five to eight months. Bulls are infected for life, at this time there is no 100% effective vaccine.

The Wyoming Livestock Board recommends producers test at least one bull in their bull herd every year. There are two tests they can use both requiring a veterinarian scrape the lining of a bull's penal sheath and/or the reproductive tract of a cow. The scrapings are sent to the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory: Parasitology Section for testing. The Culture and Microscopy Test cost is $8.00 per sample for the first two samples and $6.00 for each additional sample. If the bull or cow is tested once, the test is 86-89% accurate, if the same animal is tested twice the test becomes 90-95% accurate, and a third test is 96-99% accurate. The Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Test is more costly at $30.00 per sample for the first nine samples and $25.00 for each additional sample. The PCR test is much more accurate with 90-95% accuracy on the first sample and 96-99% accuracy on the second sample from the same animal.

A total of 7,073 head where tested in Wyoming between September 1, 2008 and June 16, 2009. Positive bulls (88 head) where found in seven counties, with the largest percent found in the southwest quarter of Wyoming. However, this may not be a true representation of the number of infected bulls in Wyoming. The seven counties with positive bulls tested an average of 555 head per county, while the remaining 16 counties tested an average of 197 head.

The Wyoming Livestock Board has created their Chapter 15 Rules; The purpose of these rules are "To prevent the introduction of, and control the spread of, Trichomoniasis, a vernal disease in Bovines." The Livestock Board intends to open the Chapter 15 Rules for public comment and either add or delete some suggested changes and recommendations.

A couple of suggested changes are to: reduce the age of bulls tested before being sold as breeders from 30 months of age to 12 months of age and further clarify the test requirements in a "Common Grazing Allotment". A "Common Grazing Allotment" is simply any pasture arrangement used by two or more landowners. Chapter 15 Rules require all bulls used in a "Common Grazing Allotment" test negative for Trichomoniasis at least once prior to the breeding season.

Why is it important to test or to follow these rules? It is conservatively estimated that if a producer unknowingly has a positive bull in his herd, 20-30% of the herd can be infected during the breeding season. This reduces pregnancy averages to below 80%, costing the producer $143.00 per cow per year, until the herd is clean. Few producers can economically absorb that level of loss and remain in business.

***To find out more about the Chapter 15 Rules and proposed changes, contact:***

**WY Livestock Board - Jim Schwartz, Director**
**WY State Veterinarian - Dr. Jim Logan, DVM**

- **1934 Wydott Drive, Cheyenne, WY 82002**
- **307-777-7515**
- **Website: http://wisbstate.wt.us**

# WLCI
# Executive Committee Tour

Justin Caudill, WDA/WLCI

The Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative's (WLCI) Executive Committee sponsored a tour on Oct. 22, 2009 of present and future projects in Sublette County. The tour, like all WLCI events, was open to the public and all partners.The tour was focused on four projects:

## Trappers Point

Located NW of Pinedale in the general area of the Cora turn-off of Hwy 191. Wildlife friendly fencing improvements were done in this area and a possible wildlife overpass has been proposed as a future project. The Trappers Point area is a critical migration route for Antelope and Mule Deer, and is also used by the local ranching community for grazing and trailing of livestock.

## Sommers/Grindstone Easement

This project involves acquiring 19,000 acres and integrates four ranches in Sublette County for the purpose of a conservation easement. The easement would protect the area from surface development, preserve wildlife habitat for numerous species and retain migration corridors. The project also includes public access for fishing, conveyance of mineral rights to Wyoming Game & Fish Department, protection of existing sagebrush communities and modification of fencing to wildlife friendly fencing.

## Sands Springs Draw

The main objective of this project is to maintain water quality and control soil erosion flowing into the New Fork River. The focus is on a 100-year flood event having the potential to cause erosion and transport contaminants into the New Fork River as a result of the large extent of oil and gas development. This project provides an opportunity to improve conditions for the entire watershed through a variety of projects.

## Boulder Lake Cheatgrass

This is a three year project partnering Pinedale Bureau of Land Management and Sublette County Weed & Pest to contol cheatgrass in the Boulder Lake area. After chemically treating this invasive species for three years, post-treatment monitoring will determine future methods for control. Until recently, cheatgrass was not known to grow above 7,000 ft, which is at or below the elavation of Boulder Lake. Upon success of this project, other wildlife and water development projects may be undertaken in the Boulder Lake area.

**For more information on projects or the WLCI please visit (wlci.gov), and forward any questions to Justin Caudill at: jcaudi@state.wy.us**

# Using Mediation To Resolve Board Conflict

*Jack and Jill both serve on the Lee County Recreation Board. Jill has been a member of the board for the last five years and Jack is in his first term. The board is made up of six volunteers who oversee projects to benefit the citizens of their county. The board meets monthly and the last few meetings have been a bit contentious, mainly because of Jack and Jill. Personality conflicts, busy schedules and miscommunication have led to some misunderstandings. While they are both working towards the same goal, they have very different ideas on how to get there. The tension between Jack and Jill is starting to get to everyone. Board member attendance has been down, meetings are punctuated by arguments and the word is getting out into the community that there are some problems on the board. The other board members have tried to get Jack and Jill to resolve their issues, but so far nothing has changed. The board appears to be headed towards a blow-up.*

Lucy Pauley, WDA Mediation Coordinator

Some of you might have read the previous example and thought, "How did Lucy hear about my board?" Anyone who has served on a church council, school board, 4-H council or library board knows that conflict is a natural product of group dynamics. Disagreements and conflicts are bound to arise when you have a group of people working together. While the conflict itself might be inevitable, the end result does not have to be explosive. Mediation can open up communication and help the board move forward in a positive direction.

Conflict can be a healthy part of the group dynamic. It can challenge us to look at new solutions or identify obstacles that are holding us back. Working together to solve the problem can help the group become closer and grow.

But what if the conflict is tearing the group apart? Conflict can eat away at the fiber of the group and make people want to stop participating. Unhealthy dynamics occur as people take sides and form camps. As communication shuts down, ideas stop being generated and volunteers withdraw.

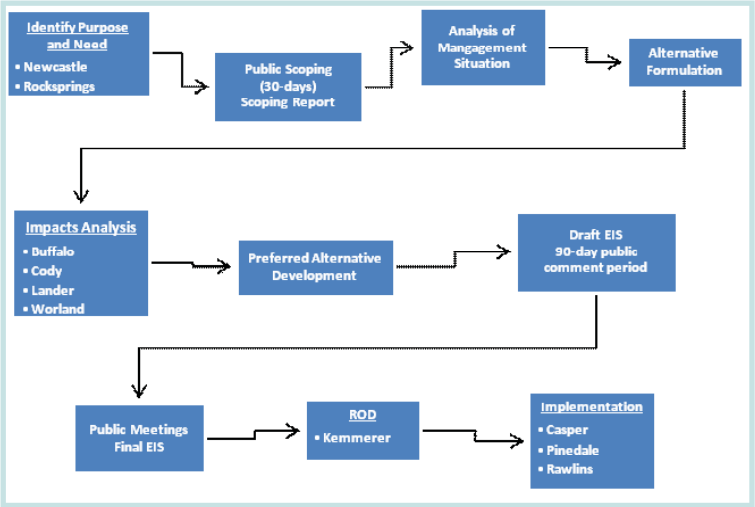
Let's talk about what mediation can do. The use of a neutral third party can help the board get to the bottom of the problem. The mediator will start off by asking each board member to talk about the situation that has developed. This shared "story-telling" will help the group look at each of their individual perspectives. The mediator and the board will work together to generate a list of issues and the mediator will make sure everyone has a chance to be heard. As they work through the process, the mediator will help the board develop a list of possible solutions. Each of those solutions will then be analyzed and an agreement will be put together to meet everyone's needs.

The Wyoming Agriculture and Natural Resource Mediation Program has conducted mediation sessions for boards and councils over for several years. Mediation is most effective if everyone on the board is interested in resolving the situation and have the resources (time and energy) to implement the changes. Mediation is not always easy. In the above scenario, for mediation to be successful both Jack and Jill will have to get some tough issues out on the table and come to terms with their behavior towards one another. However, the mediator might be able to help them get past the anger and miscommunication that has occurred and develop a plan for a healthier interaction in the future. ✦ ***For more information on mediation, contact Lucy Pauley at lpaule@state.wy.us or (307) 777-8788.***

# The RMP Roundup

Jessica Crowder, Senior Policy Analyst

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) uses Resource Management Plans (RMPs) as a framework for management of lands under their jurisdiction. These plans are revised every 15 to 20 years. During revisions, representatives of elected officials are invited to serve as cooperating agencies, and the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) is included in the list of state cooperators.




As a cooperator, it is an honor for the WDA to represent the agricultural community in Wyoming by attending meetings, writing comments on documents, and working to identify effects of BLM actions on agriculture. We have worked very closely with the BLM and other cooperators throughout each RMP and look forward to seeing the final product, although we are still a couple years away from that.

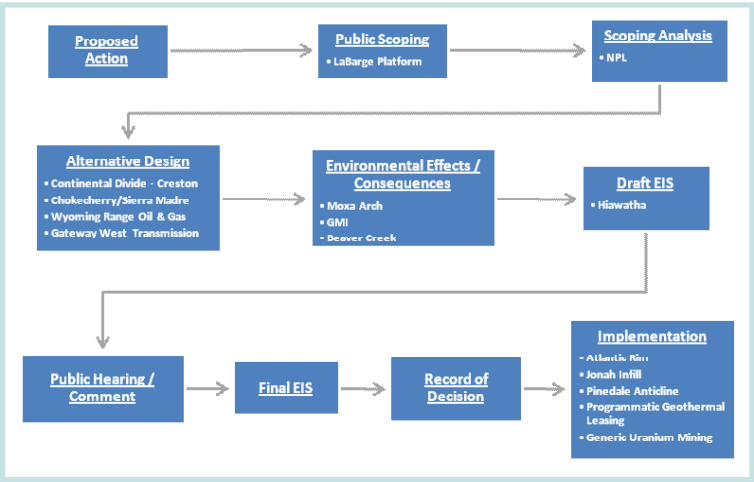
RMP revisions go through a long process, generally taking 4 years to complete. The process is devised to encourage public input and ensure the BLM is making sound land management decisions. The timeline above identifies steps in the process, where each Wyoming BLM Field Office is in the process, and at what point the public has the ability to comment. ✦

# The EIS Roundup

Chris Wichmann, Senior Policy Analyst

The purpose of this article is to give a snap-shot of the major Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) projects we are working on, an update on the status of these projects within the EIS process, and a brief description of the EIS process.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires an EIS be performed on a federal action that may create significant impacts on the human and natural environment. An EIS describes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action and then develops alternative actions. Mitigation measures can be included into alternatives to reduce impacts below the level of significance. An EIS project typically lasts anywhere from 1 ½ years to over 3 years depending on the complexity and controversial nature of the proposed action.




The graphic shows the basic steps within an EIS project, and the status of each project within this process. ✦

**For more information:**

-BLM website http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en.html

-Review policy comments submitted by WDA http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/natres/policymanage.htm

-Contact Jessica Crowder or Chris Wichmann 307-777-7321

# JIO and the New PAPO

Lisa Reinhart, JIO

The Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office (JIO) has been operating since its inception in March 2006 with the signing of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Jonah Infill Oil & Gas Development Project. The Charter Members of the JIO, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA), and Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ), set the stage early by creating a very proactive and innovative interagency office dedicated to mitigating the impacts of intensive oil and gas development in the 30,000-acre Jonah Natural Gas Field.

Since 2006, the JIO, along with many other partners, has funded numerous mitigation projects including conservation easements, wildlife-friendly fence modifications, escape-ramp installations, woodstove change-out installations for improved air quality, livestock mitigation and many other projects through its $24.5 million Mitigation Fund.

Then something next door to the Jonah Field happened! The Pinedale Anticline Natural Gas Field, with its 200,000 acres of world-class resources including North America's longest pronghorn antelope migration route, enters the picture. Like the Jonah, the Pinedale Anticline also includes one of North America's greatest concentrations of natural gas. In order to properly and responsibly develop this natural gas resource to a similar intensity as the Jonah Field, a ROD for the Pinedale Anticline Project Area was executed in September 2008 by the BLM. This ROD created the Pinedale Anticline Project Office (PAPO) along with a $36 million Mitigation and Monitoring Fund.

Since the charter members of the PAPO were the same member agencies as the JIO, along with the addition of Sublette County to the group, it became obvious to everyone that it would be advantageous to utilize the same JIO staff for the new PAPO in order to create an efficient, cost-effective "force" to perform mitigation and monitoring in both gas fields. This concept was accepted and formalized in the first meeting of the PAPO Agency Managers Committee in April 2009. The Pinedale Anticline ROD also provided for additional positions for WDEQ and WG&FD to accomplish the responsibilities and commitments of the PAPO. ✦ *Photo Left to Right: Jim Lucas BLM, Jennifer Frazier WDEQ, Dan Stroud WGFD, Lisa Reinhart WDA*

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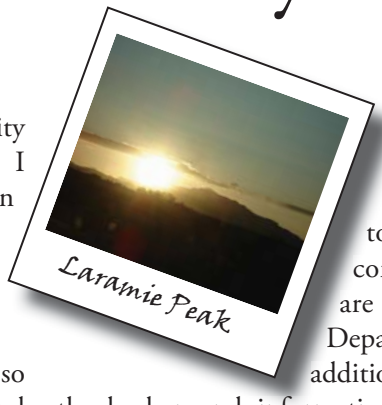
# A Snapshot of the "Policy" Side of the Natural Resources & Policy Division

Leanne Stevenson, Manager

During the last couple of months, I have had the opportunity to travel around our great state for business and pleasure. I never tire of seeing the beauty of our state during each season of the year. Most of my travel occurred during good weather with only a small amount of white knuckle driving.


Laramie Peak

As I drive around the state, I am reminded of the reason the Natural Resources and Policy division staff are so important to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture and the people in agriculture who devote their lives in managing what God has given us in the way of resources and challenges. I am very proud to say the staff members from our division are dedicated to the work they do so diligently to negotiate, comment on and defend policy that has effects on agriculture.

Riparian Health on Muddy Creek

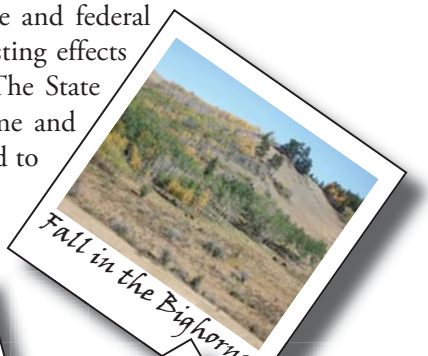
To give you, our clients, an idea of work we do in relation to policy, I would offer the following information and facts. The facts presented are taken directly from our policy log database as a part of document processing and tracking.

For the past six months:

- *215 documents were processed and reviewed.*
- *These documents came from 43 different offices and agencies.*
- *They ranged from fairly simple applications and notices of meetings to very complex resource management plan documents and endangered species act petitions.*
- *All documents are processed through an internal ranking process where documents are prioritized as high, medium and low. Documents ranked as a high priority have a high potential of impact to the agriculture industry in the state. We have a category "N/A" that says either it does not have a significant impact to agriculture OR we do not have the opportunity to comment (ex: decision document, final rule, etc.)*
- *47 high ranking documents processed.*
- *31 medium ranking documents processed.*
- *61 low ranking documents processed.*
- *76 N/A ranking documents processed: even though they may be an N/A, the document usually requires being read and analyzed for impacts.*

Of those 215 processed documents, staff has worked to insure 57 written and oral comments were complete that are in line with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture stance. In addition, time was spent researching the background information and potential for impacts on another 44 documents where written or oral comments were not warranted due to a wide variety of reasons which includes – LACK of STAFF TIME.

Through this policy process, it is important for us to work with our other partners in agriculture and to foster the two-way sharing of information with producers. This works to keep us apprised of local, state and federal policies that may have long-lasting effects to the State and its people. The State where I am proud to call home and the people whom I am honored to call my friends. ✦

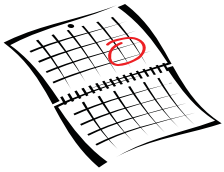

Fall in the Bighorns

Conservation Partners

Shoshone NF

Aspen Alley

Dubois Tour



# Upcoming Events

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|---|---|
| December 1-3: | Range Beef Cow Symposium, Casper |
| December 6-9: | WY Stockgrowers & WY Woolgrowers Joint Winter Convention, Casper |
| December 8: | WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call |
| December 9: | Mediation and Conflict in the Workplace Workshop, Casper |
| December 13-16: | National Conference on Grazing Lands, Reno, NV |
| January 9: | Livestock Roundtable with Dr. Jim Logan, Cody |
| January 13: | WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call |
| January 20-23 | American Sheep Industry Annual Convention, Nashville, TN |
| January 22-23: | Multi-State Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference, Scottsbluff, NE |
| January 28: | "Dealing with Disaster", Powell |
| January 31-Feb 3: | National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, Orlando, FL |
| February 7-11: | The Society for Range Management and The Weed Science Society of America Joint Annual Meeting, Denver, CO |
| March 10: | WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call |
| April 12-13: | WY Board of Agriculture Meeting, Casper |

If you have questions or comments about the information in this newsletter, please contact Michelle MacDonald, WY Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Policy section at 307.777.7323 or mmacdo@state.wy.us

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