

# The Corner Post

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources & Policy Division  
Newsletter



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

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*"Sacred cows make the best hamburgers."  
-Mark Twain*

\*Cover photo courtesy of Vicki Gibson

# Mediation and Ag Issues: *Another tool for navigating uncertain times*

Lucy Pauley, Mediation Program Coordinator

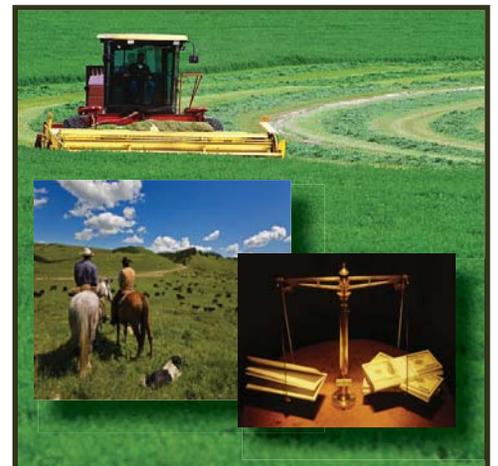
The agricultural mediation program in Wyoming started in 1987 as a result of the farm credit crisis that was occurring nationwide. Across the country, farmers and ranchers were liquidating their operations and in some cases being foreclosed upon. Rural advocacy groups pushed for the use of mediation to help borrowers and lenders negotiate alternatives. Mediation was included as a step in the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) appeal process. In some of the Midwestern states, mediation between borrowers and private banks and lenders became a mandatory process.

In 2011, the Wyoming Agricultural & Natural Resources Mediation Program has seen an increase in the number of requests for mediation involving agricultural credit issues. I wondered if the current economic situation in the country is resulting in more financially distressed farmers and ranchers in Wyoming. I spoke to a few agricultural lenders in the state and found the following information. Currently, the market is reflecting

record prices for livestock and crops but at the same time, expenses are also high so the margin of profit remains small. It appears that the majority of borrowers with FSA loans and those with private lenders are still making their payments on time and staying out of the appeals process.

If you do find yourself in a situation with your lender, consider using mediation as a tool for resolving the issue. In farm credit situations, as well as many other conflicts, using mediation early in the process can often lead to

Continued on page 3



# Welcome Chris!

## Wichmann selected as Natural Resources & Policy Manager

Derek Grant, Public Information Officer



Chris Wichmann was recently named Manager of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) Natural Resources and Policy (NR&P) Division and has already begun working in that position.

A Cheyenne native with experience in both the public and private sector, Wichmann brings a wide knowledge base to the position along with extensive experience as a supervisor, researcher, and project manager.

“We are incredibly happy and excited to have Chris as Manager of our Natural Resources and Policy division.” said Jason Fearnelyhough, Director of the WDA. “Along with his strong natural resources and policy background, his experience in both the public and private sector and management expertise will be incredibly beneficial to the division.”

“I am very excited to have the opportunity to serve citizens in the state as Manager of the Natural Resources and Policy Division,” said Wichmann. “My goal is to make sure that the divisions

priorities are in line with the actions occurring on the ground.” Most recently, Wichmann acted as a Natural Resources and Policy Program Principal at the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. As NR&P Program Principal, Wichmann managed more than 25 large NEPA projects, provided input on the biennial budget and oversaw the staff budget for the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative.

Prior to this, he also worked as a Senior Environmental Scientist and Regional Practice Center Leader for Natural Resources with Short, Elliott, Hendrickson, Inc. where he developed strategic plans for the natural resource practice center and the state of Wyoming. He was also responsible for project management and completion of numerous environmental projects in Colorado and Wyoming. He also worked as the Head of Environmental Services with the Washington Group, Assistant Superintendent with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and Fish Biologist and Fish Culturist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Chris earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Fish and Wildlife Biology from the University of Wyoming and has spent his entire professional career working on natural resources issues. Chris enjoys spending time with his wife Kimber and two children, fishing and visiting their cabin in Glendo. ✦

## Invasive Weeds and Off-Road Vehicles

..... *a speedy way to spread SEEDS!*

Larry Bentley, WDA Eastern Consultant

The Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) groups I facilitate often include a goal of controlling various invasive weeds. Usually, one of the objectives under that goal is controlling spread caused by off-road use of ATV’s and other vehicles during either hunting season or oil and gas exploration.

While researching ideas on how to achieve this goal, I found a study completed by the University of Montana on the collection of seeds by ATV’s and off-road vehicles. Their study found that ATV’s can accumulate as many as 5500 seeds per mile driven off-road, and that other vehicles driven off-road can exceed that amount, especially when driven in muddy conditions.

The study also found that under dry conditions the vehicles carried the seeds for over one hundred sixty miles, and that seeds picked up under muddy conditions often stayed until a rain event or the vehicle was washed.

The data collected is important especially if landowners are concerned with oil and gas exploration and drilling. Vehicles and ATV’s brought by out of state hunters could bring the next invasion of non-native weeds to your ranch.

A rule requiring all off road machinery to be washed before it enters your property is a good way of preventing the spread of invasive plant seeds. ✦

# Pathway to Water Quality

## Wyoming State Fairgrounds

Justin Williams, Ag Program Coordinator

Creative minds, hard work and financial support have all made the Pathway to Water Quality Project (Project) come together in time for the Wyoming State Fair. The Project was started by the Wyoming Natural Resources Conservation Service and Resource Conservation and Development, Wyoming Conservation Districts and other entities to develop an outdoor educational area along the banks of the North Platte River on the Wyoming State Fairgrounds.

Visitors to the State Fairgrounds can walk the pathway along the river and read interpretive signs, learn innovative ways to reduce soil erosion, water runoff and pollution into waterways using new technologies as well

as incorporating water saving methods, by utilizing rain barrels and other techniques.

The Project development is in the beginning stages with a design allowing expansion as funds become available. So far, the Project progress consists of the entry way to the Communicom Building on the West side of the State Fairgrounds, interpretive signage and installation of Eco Grid and Drivable Grass, to name a few. The Project is an outdoor classroom and is designed to educate visitors year round, not just during State Fair. If you're in the area for horse shows, hockey games, or just taking a stroll down the path, take a look at the progress. ✦



Pathway to Water Quality - Before



Pathway to Water Quality - Artist Rendition



## Mediation (continued from page 1)

better results. Addressing a problem early allows both the borrower and the lender to consider a wider variety of options. If you try mediation before the lender has begun the liquidation or foreclosure process, you can often find mutually agreed-upon solutions that benefit both the borrower and the lender. The Mediation Program can also put you in touch with a financial counselor to help you look at your current plan and think about other options.

While the current economic situation is unsteady and unknown, the forecast might not be as bleak for many Wyoming agricultural producers. Making educated decisions and consulting with your lender can help keep your operation moving forward. Consider mediation if you do find yourself with an agricultural credit concern. For more information on mediation, please contact Lucy Pauley at [lucy.pauley@wyo.gov](mailto:lucy.pauley@wyo.gov) or (307) 777-8788. ✦

# Friend of Agriculture Award Rachel Mealor

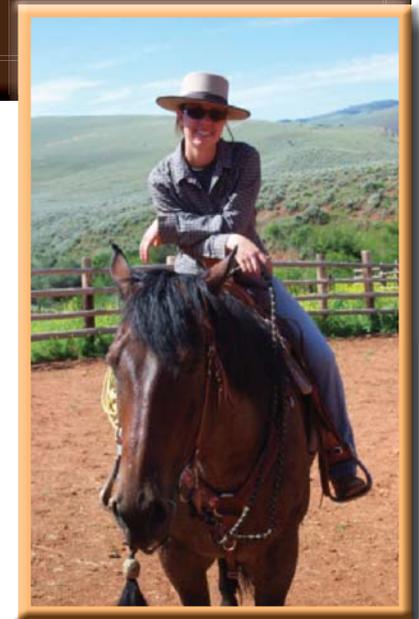
Jessica Crowder, Senior Policy Analyst



The Excellence in Agriculture Awards recognize individuals or organizations with outstanding records of support or service to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) and the Wyoming agriculture industry. The Friend of Agriculture Award is one of these awards and is given to a person who has gone above and beyond to promote sustainable agriculture in Wyoming. The recipient has worked with the WDA and demonstrated an expertise and passion for agricultural values.

This year's recipient of the Friend of Agriculture Award, Rachel Mealor, has worked with the WDA, particularly the Natural Resources and Policy Division, on several projects that demonstrate her expertise and dedication to Wyoming producers and land managers. Rachel currently serves as the Extension Range Specialist in the Department of Renewable Resources at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. She was presented the Friend of Agriculture Award at the Director's Reception on August 19, 2011 at the Wyoming State Fair.

Rachel is very involved in WDA programs. She has been an asset to the WDA through her work on the Rangeland Health Assessment Program development committee where she helped develop rules and supplemental documents. She is also a strong supporter of the program, is involved with the Rangeland Health Assessment pilot projects and has been a leader in UW's active involvement with the program.



Rachel works tirelessly to promote agriculture, teach others about range management and is always willing to help the WDA with special projects. Rachel played an instrumental role in updating the Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) workbook. She enthusiastically volunteered to serve on multiple committees throughout the process and her contributions and insight make the publication a valuable resource for CRM groups.

Rachel participates in a wide variety of agricultural and natural resource functions. She is an active member of the Society for Range Management and helps coordinate student activities within the organization. She regularly attends Wyoming Stock Growers/Wyoming Wool Growers Association conventions, helps select the annual Environmental Stewardship winner and assists in preparations for the tour and is involved in the statewide reclamation and range schools that educate landowners and other interested parties on livestock and range management issues. She is recognized as a valuable resource for range issues and producer education.

Rachel's knowledge of rangeland monitoring and her ability to work well with agriculture producers and natural resource professionals, as well as her passion for agriculture, make her a very important asset to Wyoming and a deserving recipient of this award. We appreciate Rachel's support of WDA programs and her enthusiastic dedication to the agriculture industry. It was a pleasure to thank Rachel for her continued dedication to agriculture with this award. ✦

## Americans with Disabilities Act

To obtain this publication in an alternative format, contact the Wyoming Department of Agriculture at (307) 777-7323.



Justin Caudill, WLCI Program Coordinator

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's Program Coordinator to the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) is being a liaison between southwestern Wyoming's ag-community and the WLCI's state and federal partners. It is a pleasure to learn about and share information regarding WLCI participants. The entity I would like to feature today is the Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District (SERCD); a key participant in the WLCI's Carbon County Local Project Development Team. The SERCD provides expertise and local knowledge to this team, improving on the ground actions that form the foundation for landscape-scale conservation efforts.

SERCD hosted a public information event in early spring of this year, focusing on long range conservation planning and resources available in Carbon County. The WLCI Coordination Team and eight other contributors provided informational booths and educational materials describing what each organization is and how they can contribute to Carbon County's conservation actions. The booths were sponsored by SERCD, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Bureau of Land Management Rawlins Field Office, U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Sleeping Giant Inc., Carbon County Planning & Zoning, Power Company of Wyoming and WLCI.

The event included six presentations on information and resources that could be used to help with conservation efforts. Presented topics ranged from mission statements, on-the-ground actions, statute requirements, new reclamation

materials, Geographic Information Systems, and resource internet tools to renewable energy developments. The event was very informative and educational, fulfilling one of SERCD's missions of "outreach and education" by providing a basis for well-informed and locally led conservation. ✦

### Other programs and goals of the SERCD:

- **District Operations** - Maintain accountability of all public funds and provide professional services in a timely and responsible manner
- **Trees** – Promote the wise use of their tree resources
- **Range** – Provide expertise and guidance to promote healthy rangelands
- **Water Quantity** – Promote the conservation and availability of water for all beneficial uses
- **Water Quality** – Provide leadership to maintain or improve the quality of water within all watersheds in the SERCD
- **Environmental Policy** - Participate in a cooperative effort in resource enhancement and protection
- **Education** – Provide natural resource education
- **Soils** – Promote the conservation of soil
- **Wildlife** – Promote the sustainability of healthy populations and their contributions to the economic stability of the District

To receive an electronic or printed copy of The Cornerpost Newsletter, please contact Michelle MacDonald at: 307-777-7323 or [michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov](mailto:michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov).

Our newsletter is also found on the Wyoming Department of Agriculture website: <http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp>

# Recent Major Projects Proposed by the Bureau of Land Management

Chris Wichmann, Manager

In previous year's articles we provided you with a snap-shot of major National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) projects the Natural Resources and Policy Division – Policy Analysts were working on. The majority of the major projects EIS/EAs are still ongoing (i.e. Continental Divide-Creston Oil and Gas Development Project). However, in the last two years several more major projects have been proposed or have started through the NEPA process.

## Oil and Gas Development Projects

- Normally Pressured Lance Natural Gas Development Project – Project was re-proposed to increase the number of wells to 3,500.
- Gun Barrel, Madden Deep, Iron Horse Natural Gas Development Project – Project is being considered to significantly expand the number of wells.
- Table Rock Oil and Gas Field Project – The project would consist of 88 wells.
- LaBarge Platform Exploration and Development Project – project would consist of 838 oil and gas wells.

## Uranium Projects

- Lost Creek In-situ Uranium Project – Project area consists of 4,250 acres.
- Gas Hills Uranium Project – Project area consists of 7,940 acres.
- Sheep Mountain Uranium Project – Project area consist of 3,600 acres.

## Wind Energy Development Projects

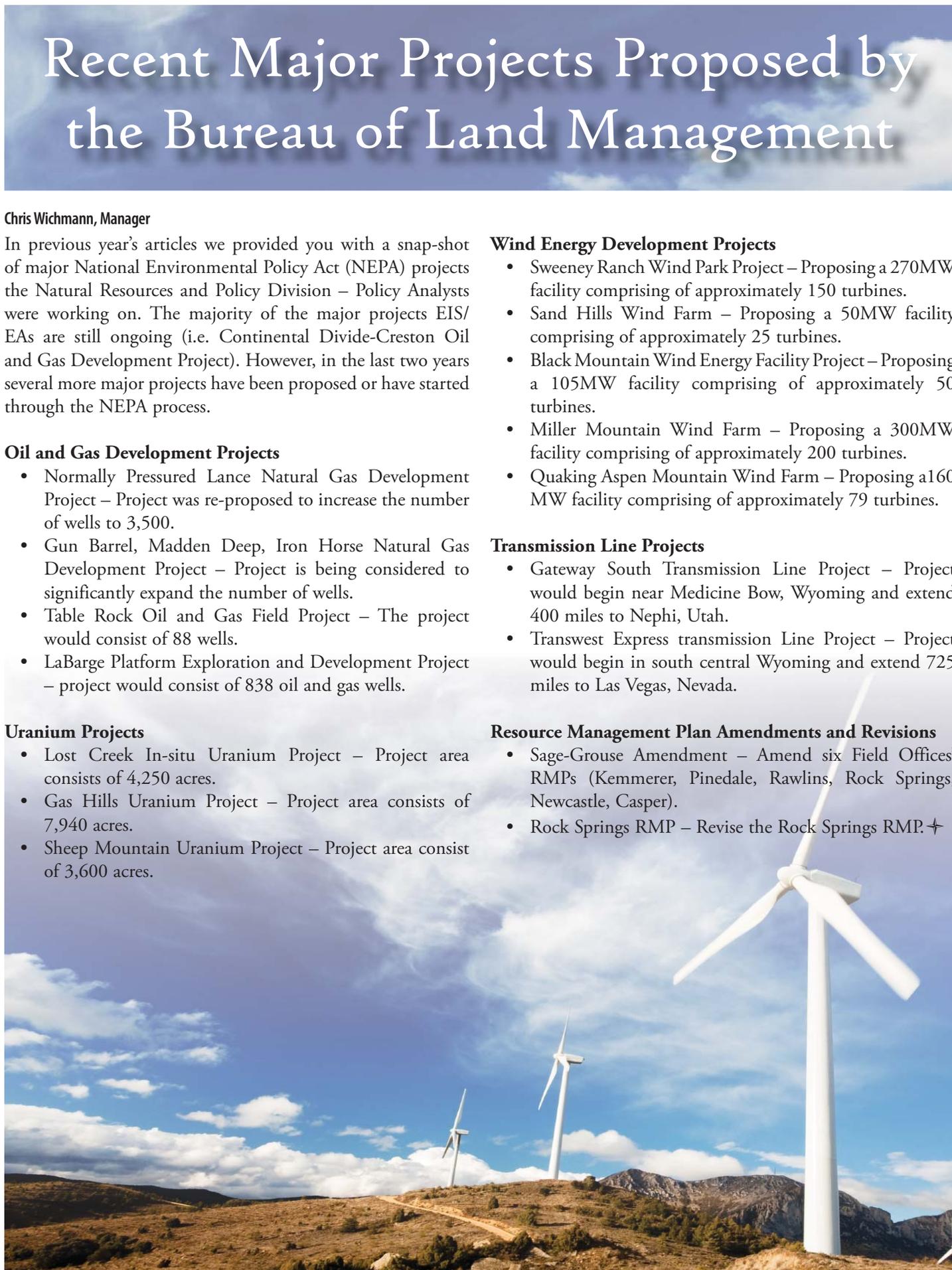
- Sweeney Ranch Wind Park Project – Proposing a 270MW facility comprising of approximately 150 turbines.
- Sand Hills Wind Farm – Proposing a 50MW facility comprising of approximately 25 turbines.
- Black Mountain Wind Energy Facility Project – Proposing a 105MW facility comprising of approximately 50 turbines.
- Miller Mountain Wind Farm – Proposing a 300MW facility comprising of approximately 200 turbines.
- Quaking Aspen Mountain Wind Farm – Proposing a 160 MW facility comprising of approximately 79 turbines.

## Transmission Line Projects

- Gateway South Transmission Line Project – Project would begin near Medicine Bow, Wyoming and extend 400 miles to Nephi, Utah.
- Transwest Express transmission Line Project – Project would begin in south central Wyoming and extend 725 miles to Las Vegas, Nevada.

## Resource Management Plan Amendments and Revisions

- Sage-Grouse Amendment – Amend six Field Offices' RMPs (Kemmerer, Pinedale, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Newcastle, Casper).
- Rock Springs RMP – Revise the Rock Springs RMP. †



# JIO/PAPO Mitigation Efforts Continue



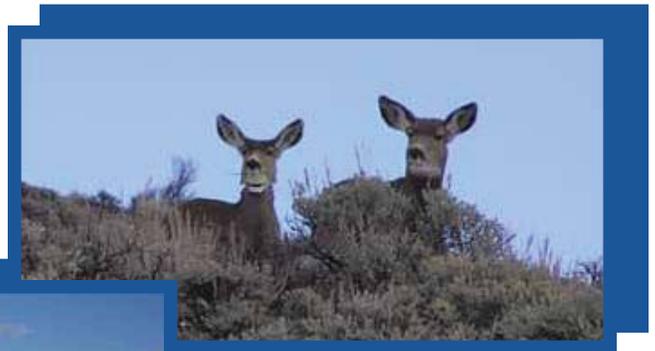
Windy Kelley, JIO Ag Program Coordinator

The JIO and PAPO accept mitigation project proposals throughout the year, with a deadline of October 31 for the following funding cycle. The Jonah Interagency (JIO) and Pinedale Anticline (PAPO) offices executive boards met in May to review and elect projects to fund in 2011. The following is a brief overview of the mitigation projects each of the offices funded.

The JIO funded 5 of the 10 requests they received for mitigation dollars. The office contributed to the purchase of two conservation easements for a total of \$640,000, helping to conserve 11,480 deeded acres, and providing 2 miles of public fishing and wildlife viewing access along the Green River. The office also funded a 1.75-mile river restoration project on the New Fork River, with the objectives to enhance recreation opportunities (e.g., fishing), and to demonstrate restoration techniques. The board approved \$132,000 for the wood stove change out program, which is the third year the office has funded the effort. The purpose of this project is to replace older, non-certified wood stoves for new less polluting, EPA-certified stoves. Replacing older stoves with EPA-certified

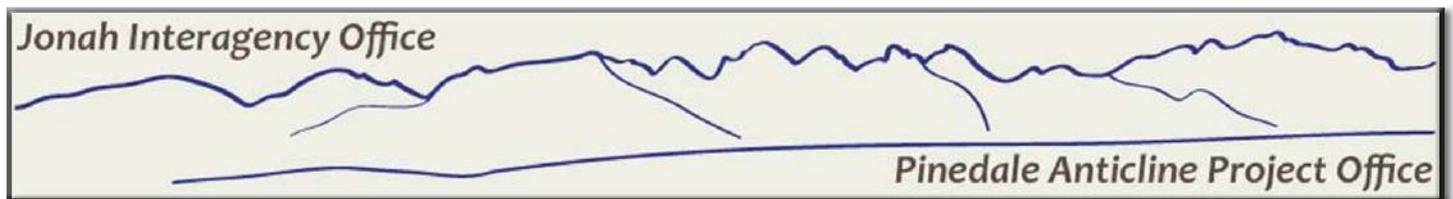
stoves reduces visibility-impairing pollutants (mainly particulate matter). The fifth project is a diesel emission reduction program with the objectives to reduce diesel emissions through retrofits, repowers, and by providing preventative maintenance programs, employee training, as well as teaching idle reduction practices (amount funded \$150,000).

The PAPO funded 3 of the 12 proposed mitigation projects they received. This included contributing funds to the second phase of the Wyoming Land Trust's 'Wildlife Friendly Fencing Initiative' for \$250,000. This phase of the greater project enables approximately 200 miles of public or private fences to be modified to wildlife-friendly standards in a mule deer migration corridor. The office also funded a Bald Eagle habitat research project (amount funded



2010 Fertilization Project

\$60,000). The intent of this project is to gain a better understanding of Bald Eagle habitat in the area and potential mitigation projects. The final project the PAPO funded is a habitat improvement project. This project entails applying nitrogen fertilizer with the objective to increase sagebrush leader growth to provide additional winter browse for mule deer. The PAPO anticipates treating the first 1,000 acres this fall, and an additional 2,000 acres fall of 2012 (amount approved \$71,900 and \$143,800, respectively). *✦ To learn more about the JIO/PAPO offices, the mitigation projects, and the offices monitoring work, visit: <http://www.wy.blm.gov/jio-papo/>*





# Upcoming Events

|                 |   |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| October 11:     | WY Board of Agriculture Meeting, Cheyenne   | December 12-13  | “Make A Plan” WY Agriculture Succession and Estate Planning Seminar, Casper |
| October 12-14:  | Agrifuture, Laramie   | December 13-15: | WY Stock Growers Association Winter Convention, Casper                      |
| October 19:     | Conflict Resolution Day Symposium, Casper   | Jan 29-Feb 1:   | National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention, Las Vegas |
| November 8:     | WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call   | Jan 29-Feb 3:   | Society for Range Management 65 <sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Spokane       |
| November 11-13: | WY Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Laramie  | February 13:    | 2012 Legislative Budget Session Convenes                                    |
| November 14-18: | WY Association of Conservation District and the Society for Range Management Joint Convention, Lander |                 |   |
| December 13:    | WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call   |                 |   |

If you have questions or comments about the information in this newsletter, please contact Michelle MacDonald, WY Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Policy Division at 307.777.7323 or [michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov](mailto:michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov).

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