



The Corner Post

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources & Policy Division
Newsletter



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

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Quotable Quotes

“Moo may represent an idea, but only the cow knows.”
-Mason Cooley

Supplements

To Increase Forage Value & Utilization

Larry Bentley, Eastern Wyoming Consultant

2012 will be remembered as the worst drought in the history of Wyoming and possibly the most costly to livestock producers. In a time when we are moving off the open range early, selling calves early, and in some cases depopulating our cattle herds, we need to consider how to increase the value of the forage that is available.

One way is to supplement the mature and often year old forage we are grazing with low moisture blocks (LMB). In most cases these LMB are available in 250 pound tubs that contain fats, minerals and crude protein of from 20 to 40 percent.

Mature dry forage usually has a protein content of 4 to 6 percent. A dry, pregnant cow requires at least 6 to 7 percent protein

which increases if she is still nursing a calf. These requirements can only be met by adding a supplement to the cow's diet.

The remoteness of our summer and fall rangelands makes the 250 pound LMB tub an ideal supplement. Studies have found that cattle tend to graze in a 1/3 mile circle around the tub, so changing a location should be at least 2/3 of a mile from the old location.

The 250 pound tub should feed twenty-five cattle for about fourteen days at a cost of approximately \$15.00 per cow per month. If the LMB increases the pregnancy rate or increases the calf's daily gain by 3/4 to 1 pound per day, the benefits will pay for the LMB. †

Wanted: Your Comments

The Shoshone National Forest has invited the public to participate in reviewing the Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

A 90-day public comment period has begun and comments must be postmarked or emailed no later than **November 1, 2012**. A series of public meetings will also be held starting in September. You can find more

information at www.fs.usda.gov/detail/shoshone/home/?cid=stelprdb5379153.

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture will be providing comments and would like to hear your thoughts on the Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Please contact Jessica Crowder at jessica.crowder@wyo.gov or (307)777-7024. †

New Funding Program for Applied Agriculture Research

Chris Wichmann, Manager

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) is developing a new grant program to fund applied agriculture research projects. Applied agriculture research is defined as “practical agricultural science or methodologies designed to address issues affecting agricultural producers.” The general intent of this program is to identify issues affecting agriculture in the state and providing research or solutions to mitigate these issues, by providing knowledge or agriculture practices that will enhance the natural resource base, economic viability of agriculture operations, and/or the quality of life for production agriculture in Wyoming.

The Legislature directed the WDA to develop rules and regulations for the program, establish an application process and solicit applications for applied research. These grants are available to educational institutions or other qualified entities. The legislature appropriated \$200,000 for this biennium to fund potential projects.

Currently, we are drafting program Rules in consultation with agriculture producers, agricultural industry leaders and the University of Wyoming. Once the draft Rules are completed, the formal rule making process will begin with the Secretary of State Office. Part of the formal process will entail a 30-day public comment period. It is the intent of the WDA to have the Rules completed and grant funding available by fall or early winter of 2012, so approved applicants can implement their research projects by spring 2013.

The WDA is excited about this opportunity for Wyoming agricultural producers to identify issues and create solutions at the ground level. We believe this program can greatly benefit agriculture production in the state and help sustain our agricultural communities. ✦

If you have any questions or an interest in this program please contact the Natural Resource and Policy Division at 307-777-7323

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

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

MANAGING PRODUCER STRESS

During Drought and Other Natural Disasters

Lucy Pauley, Mediation Program Coordinator

Agricultural operations can be stressful in the best of times, with uncertainty around livestock and crop prices, machines breaking down and time pressures, not to mention many long hours. Furthermore, agricultural families face the same daily issues as non-farm families; illnesses or death of family members, little time for vacations, caring for aging parents, divorce and more. During a spring and summer like this year's, with extreme drought and wildfires, the stress can really start to grow.

Over the generations, agricultural producers have had to deal with many natural disasters, tough livestock markets, animal diseases and many other stressful events. Today's producers may feel like high levels of stress just come with the territory. However, the stress from surviving a drought like we've seen this year can be different from that seen in an event like a tornado, for example. Stress during a drought builds over time and is more long-lasting as we see the effect that the hot, dry weather has on the animals, the resource and finally livestock prices.

Everyone reacts differently to stress and stress can express itself in many ways. General symptoms of stress can include increased headaches, stomach problems, trouble sleeping, and higher blood pressure. Emotionally, you may find yourself more impatient or irritable, depressed or have difficulty in handling your emotions. Long-term stress can take a toll on your mental and physical health. It's important to recognize the signs and take steps to manage stress.

There are many excellent resources available for managing stress. Suggestions include a visit to your doctor, even if just for a general check-up. Maintain your relationships with family and friends. Get regular exercise and try to get enough sleep every night. Eat a well-balanced diet and try to find a few minutes every now and then for your hobbies or things you enjoy.

You may find that stress has led to conflicts within your operation that may seem insurmountable. The Mediation Program has resources and services available to help families resolve issues related to estate planning, farm credit, federal land grazing and more. For more information, you can visit our website at <http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp/mediation-program> or call us toll free at 1-888-996-9278. †

If you need additional help managing your stress, there are several publications that are specific to Wyoming available at the following websites:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/wyo-disaster/stress.html>
<http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/wyo-disaster/resources.html>
<http://www.uwyo.edu/agrability/publications.htm>

You can also contact your local community mental health center or call our office for more information.

Americans with Disabilities Act

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

Pinedale Anticline Project Office

Mitigation at Work



Windy Kelley, JIO/PAPO Coordinator

Generally, it is understood there are associated impacts with the implementation of any development. With this in mind, measurable thresholds for key wildlife species relying on the Pinedale Anticline Project Area (PAPA) seasonally or year round were established in the PAPA Record of Decision (ROD) (see Appendix B of the ROD). The Pinedale Anticline Project Office (PAPO) is responsible for the monitoring of five wildlife species identified in the wildlife matrix in the ROD: mule deer, antelope [pronghorn], sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, and white-tailed prairie dog.

The matrix is comprised of 1) monitoring criteria, 2) general monitoring methods, 3) the type of changes to be monitored for, 4) thresholds which trigger mitigation, and 5) mitigation responses. The criteria for mule deer are based on abundance of deer on the Mesa (an area of the PAPA), and avoidance of infrastructure. Sawyer and Nielson (2010 and 2011) reported in the annual reports titled 'Mule Deer Monitoring in the Pinedale Anticline Project Area' that the abundance threshold was breached during the 2009 – 2010 and the 2010 – 2011 winters, which triggered a mitigation response.

The PAPO office solicited mitigation projects tailored toward the Sublette Mule Deer herd, to be implemented

on or around the Mesa. One of several projects the office has received and funded was proposed by the Bureau of Land Management Pinedale Field Office (PFO) and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). The PFO and WGFD Wildlife Biologists proposed a fence inventory and modification project on the Mesa. The project was funded in May of this year for \$500,000, and has been administered by the Wyoming Land Trust (WLT), in coordination with the PFO, PAPO, and fence/land owners.

The first phase of the project was to inventory the status of fences on the Mesa. The inventory included recording information such as, post type and condition (e.g., steel versus wood), and the number of strands of wire, wire spacing and whether or not the wire was barbed. After the inventory was complete, the WLT coordinated with PFO Wildlife Biologists, and the PAPO team to present the inventory and prioritize sections of fence to be modified in 2012. Additionally, the WLT met with all fence/land owners within the 2012 priority area. Fence/land owners can voluntarily participate in the wildlife fence modification project. If they choose to participate, they are asked to sign, thereby agreeing to, the modification specifications and to maintain the fence for at least 20 years. A personal benefit of participating in the project is to have parts (e.g., posts) or sections of fence replaced at no cost to the land owner.

The 2012 priority area was determined by mule deer concentration areas (informed by radio collared data), fence segments with carcass points, and land owner interest for participating in the project. The final phase of



Photos courtesy of Wyoming Land Trust

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Reaching the Bar

Taking the Lead on Public Lands Grazing



Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst

Environmental organizations in strong opposition of public lands grazing are utilizing the permit renewal process as an opening to find fatal and legal errors to reduce Animal Unit Months (AUMs) or even remove livestock from public lands. The recent increase in litigation to remove livestock is causing agencies, permittees and supporting organizations to reach for a higher bar, by documenting and providing neutral, scientifically based data to defend permit renewals. The renewal of a permit is not a guarantee and the loss of a permit or reduction of AUMs could cripple the viability of a once successful ranching operation.

There are ways permittees can take the lead on the annual tasks required to turn out livestock, increasing the success to renewing their permits and ensuring their ranching operation remains intact for generations to come. These are just a few ideas permittees should consider:

Improve Communication

- If the agency is replacing your range conservationist, initiate an in-person meeting with their replacement to tour the allotment, provide history, and generate new ideas.
- If you historically do not meet annually or biannually with agency staff, begin setting and initiating dates and meetings well in advance of turn out.

- If you and your range conservationist have a strained relationship, seek ways to bridge the gap or get third party assistance to improve communication between you both.
- If your permit could benefit from improvement projects such as fencing, roads or stock waters; work closely with the agency and file formal proposals to address the needs. At all costs, avoid making changes without agency assistance.
- If you or the agency has formal or verbal requests, return calls in a timely manner, document what was said, and request copies to maintain a current personal file. Communicate and include documented activity occurring on the allotment. Regularly review agency permit files.

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Mitigation (continued from page 4)

the project is to modify 30 to 35 miles of prioritized fence to be wildlife friendly. The project proponents' vision is to continue to leverage money to inventory and modify fences throughout the Sublette Mule Deer Herd's transitional range, which spans from the Mesa west into the northern half of the Wyoming Range.

If a fence can be modified as wildlife friendly while achieving the purpose of the fence it can be a 'win, win' situation. What makes a fence wildlife friendly? Since big game species are different sizes (think moose compared to pronghorn) and they generally cross fences in a different ways (i.e., over versus under) there is no 'one size fits all' standard. The WGFD have published a Habitat Extension Bulletin titled Fencing

Guidelines for Wildlife No. 53. Authors of the bulletin include a summary of fence designs based on fence purpose and species of wildlife in the area (e.g., deer, pronghorn, and elk and/or moose ranging with cattle and/or horses). You can find the bulletin at: <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1000616.aspx>.

To view the aforementioned annual reports, and to learn more about the monitoring and mitigation efforts of the PAPO visit <http://www.wy.blm.gov/jio-papo/papo/index.htm> or call Windy Kelley at 307.367.5378. ✦ Visit <http://wyominglandtrust.org/> to learn more about the Wyoming Land Trust.

WLCI - Local Project Development Team Roundup



Justin Caudill, Ag Program Coordinator

The Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) held its summer round of quarterly Local Project Development Team (LPDT) meetings and tours in August. These August meetings/tours highlighted various projects WLCI helped fund.

The meetings kicked off in Kemmerer with the Whitebark Pine Sanitation and the Pole Creek Prescribed Burn projects as the tour stops. The Whitebark Pine Sanitation Project involves masticating (grinding to a pulp) spruce and fir trees competing for the same resources as the whitebark pine. Whitebark pine has been designated as warranted for listing as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (76 FR 42631), but at this time is precluded from listing by other higher priority species. It is anticipated that removal of the spruce and fir will open the forest floor for the establishment of new whitebark pine seedlings.



Mosaic burn pattern in the sagebrush.
Note: grass and forb production in the foreground.

removing the non-native Russian olive and tamarisk (salt cedar) within 20 acres of city properties along the banks of the Green River. The contractor used a track-hoe with a specially designed attachment to pluck these trees and shrubs from the ground. This technique removes the root crowns (the part of the root system from which the plant stem arises), with minimal disturbance to the surrounding vegetation and ground. The contractor used another machine to grind the trees and shrubs into mulch on site.



A Whitebark Pine tree in foreground prior to treatment.

The Pole Creek Prescribed Burn was completed in 2010; WLCI went to this site to see the progress of new vegetation understory. The project's objective was to remove conifers in aspen stands and increase forb and grass production in sagebrush through the use of small mosaic burn patterns. By all accounts this burn was a success; aspen, grass, and forb production has increased in the aspen-conifer stands and the grass-forb component has increased in the sagebrush burns.

The next meeting and tour took place in Green River. The City of Green River showcased their conservation efforts;

Baggs, Wyoming was the location for Carbon county's meeting and tour. The Baggs tour stops included: Baggs Mule Deer Underpass Phase II, Wildlife Friendly Fencing, Juniper Removal, and Aspen Joint Venture. Over the past several years increased motor vehicle and oil and gas activity in the Atlantic Rim area, increased making mule deer migration across Highway 789 increasingly more difficult due to deer mortality via automobile/wildlife collisions. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Department of Transportation developed plans to install box culverts under the highway to allow the deer safe passage under the highway. The first box culvert allowed over 6,000 deer to continue on with their migration safely. On this occasion, we toured the second box culvert which was put in place to alleviate some of the associated stress of 6,000 deer moving through one area. Since installation of the first culvert, vehicle-deer collisions have been reduced from over 300 to less than 20 per year.

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Roundup (continued from page 6)



Construction of second mule deer underpass under Hwy 789.



The hillside depicts where the junipers were masticated.

Next, we examined a wildlife friendly-fencing project. Like underpass box culverts, wildlife friendly fencing has been installed to benefit migrating animals. Woven wire fences are difficult for antelope and deer to negotiate on their migration routes, forcing animals to go long distances to find an opening in the fence where they can cross. Converting fences to wildlife-friendly standards reduces the stress of having to travel long distances and helps maintain original migration corridors. The third stop took us to a couple of juniper removal projects. One of the goals of these projects was to benefit wildlife by opening the canopy to benefit other mountain shrub species. One project used mechanical means to open the canopy in a dense juniper stand. The project has increased species diversity and plant cover, while decreasing bare ground.

On our last Baggs tour stop we went to an older project where conifers were removed in aspen stands to promote aspen regeneration. After three years, aspen regeneration appears to be very successful with a significant number of new aspen sprouts ranging in size from 1' to 15' or greater.



Aspen regeneration three years after the treatment.



The Mechanical treatment of junipers.
Note the density of junipers in the background.

The final LPDT meeting and tour took place in and around Pinedale. We visited the Boulder Cheatgrass Project. This project involved aerial application of Plateau™ herbicide on prime sage-grouse habitat on BLM and private lands. This multi-year project involving fall application of the herbicide has successfully reduced cheatgrass from 60% cover to nearly 0%. The preferred native grasses and forbs have responded well to the removal of cheatgrass. ✦

The second juniper removal project we visited used a different technique. Instead of simply removing juniper, a machine actually masticated (shredded) the juniper, leaving a thick mat of mulch on the ground. This technique was employed in the hopes of providing moisture for perennial growth and reducing the probability of cheatgrass invasion.



Hillside where the aerial application of Plateau™ was applied.



Winter Grazing Strategies



Jessica Crowder, Senior Policy Analyst

This year there have been a lot of discussions about drought and range management. With fall in the air most of us have started thinking about football, hunting, shipping dates and relief from the hot, dry weather. We know that winter is not far away and it is time to start thinking about winter livestock management.

There are several winter grazing strategies ranch managers can use to improve livestock health and rangeland productivity that go beyond supplemental feeding or use of forage pastures. This article will discuss two possibilities. These strategies generally require careful consideration well before the winter grazing season begins.

There are several benefits to grazing rangelands in the winter. During winter, plants are dormant, meaning they are not actively building energy to produce roots, leaves and seeds. This is a good time to graze plants because they are not as susceptible to harm from removal of leaves and growing points. Pastures grazed in winter are usually not grazed during the growing season, allowing plants a rest from grazing when they need it most. Livestock may also utilize shrubs that are easily accessible, accounting for a small increase in forage availability when snow accumulation is high. When grazing rangelands in the winter, managers must make sure enough forage is left to

catch snow and provide thermal cover. Ideally, managers should use a pasture rotation that results in different pastures being grazed during different growing seasons from year to year. For example, if a pasture is utilized this winter, it should not be used next winter.

Another strategy is late-season calving. Dormant grasses provide little forage quality. Cattle have the highest nutritional needs during late pregnancy and lactation. Managers often have to provide high levels of supplemental feed to keep cattle healthy during winter dormancy. Late-season calving decreases the amount of supplemental feeding by matching cattle's high nutritional needs with high quality spring forage. Ease of calving also increases in warmer weather. Of course, there are financial and marketing considerations to take into account when switching to late-season calving.

Each of these strategies, among others, benefits both livestock health and rangeland health and may assist in attaining sustainable ranching operations.

For more information visit: <http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Bulletins/National-SARE-Bulletins/Rangeland-Management-Strategies>. †

NATURAL RESOURCES & POLICY DIVISION STAFF

- Chris Wichmann, Manager.....(307) 777-6576
- Jessica Crowder, Sr Policy Analyst.....777-7024
- Justin Williams, Sr Policy Analyst.....777-7067
- Lucy Pauley, Mediation Coordinator.....777-8788
- Michelle MacDonald, Administrative Specialist.....777-7323
- Justin Caudill, Ag Program Coordinator/WLCI.....352-0378
- Windy Kelley, Ag Program Coordinator/JIO.....367-5378
- Larry Bentley, Eastern WY Consultant.....867-2555



Photo courtesy of Vicki Gibson

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Reaching (continued from page 5)

- If an agency is monitoring or assessing your permit, ask to attend. Ask questions and understand how the data collected is used to make decisions or assessments.

Become Proactive

- If agency staff has not set dates for annual/biannual meetings, take the time to call and set dates. Don't simply avoid the meeting all together and hope it goes away.
- If agency staff has not sent annual billing statements prior to turn-out, call and request the invoice.
- If range improvement projects are discussed as an option to improve range conditions, they require National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Meet with agency staff and complete the application to get the project in a queue. Some projects may take 2 – 3 years to complete.
- If rangeland monitoring is not occurring, initiate with the agency, seek funding sources to help, take time to learn more about data collection and its value.
- If the agency says they don't have time or the project

is a low priority, seek outside assistance or ask for a third party facilitator to help wade through the bureaucratic red tape.

- If your permit lacks an Allotment Management Plan or Grazing Management Plan, again, take the initiative and get the process started well in advance.
- If you have a Grazing Management Plan in place, but the plan is not practical, set a meeting, months in advance to reconsider the Plan. Do not wait until the last minute or until you have already turned out.

Grazing on public lands is becoming more labor intensive and has a much higher level of bureaucracy and scrutiny. Permittees have to reach a much higher bar with a heavier workload than in the past. While not everyone agrees with the process, it is part of the ever changing world we live in. If you need further assistance, or would like to find a facilitator for upcoming planning meetings, please contact the Natural Resources and Policy Division at: 307-777-7323. †





Upcoming Events

October 16-18:	WY Board of Agriculture Meeting, Laramie	December 10-13:	Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, Wyoming Stock Growers and Society of Range Management Mega Ag Convention, Casper
October 16-18:	Agrifuture, Laramie	January 8:	2013 General Legislative Session Convenes
October 18:	Wyoming Conflict Resolution Day	January 19:	Wyoming Day at the National Western Stock Show, Denver
November 13:	WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call	January 27-30:	National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, San Antonio
November 15-16:	WY Women in Ag Symposium, Casper	February 2-8:	66 th Annual Meeting of the Society for Range Management, Oklahoma City
December 11:	WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call		
December 9-12:	5 th Annual National Conference on Grazing Lands, Orlando		

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.

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