

The Corner Post

Summer/Fall 2014

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources & Policy Division
Newsletter



WY. Dept. of Agriculture
Natural Resources & Policy Division
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"If an actor knows how to milk a cow, I always know it will not be difficult to be in business with him." -Werner Herzog

* Banner Photo Courtesy of Vicki Gibson

Get To Know Your Dirt!

Joe Budd, Senior Policy Analyst

Good dirt, bad dirt, alright dirt and just plain old dirt. It seems like everyone has their own idea of what kind of dirt they need to get things done but it can be hard to classify. First, most soil scientists can't stand it if you call it dirt – it's soil. Second, it can be very difficult to determine soil texture based on field observations but there is a wealth of knowledge available from your local conservation district, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), UW Extension or just online.

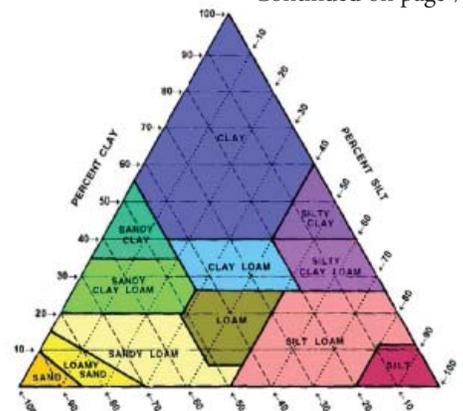
The Ecological Site Description (ESD) you find from NRCS is usually a great place to start but can be confusing. For example, it might say the soils for your area are silty clay. But what does that really look like? How can you decide if it's a silty clay or if it's a clay loam? In the case of ESDs, someone has already done this for you.

If you don't have ESDs there are ways to try to determine soils texture for yourself. Location will play a large role in many cases some area history may help. What did the area look like 10,000 years ago? 1 million years

ago? How did the mountains form and what ran downhill? Was your valley underwater or above it? What vegetation is growing there now? Soils are intimately tied to all of these things (and more) so understanding a bit of the geological history of the area will always help.

The vegetation you have now is highly dependent on the soils themselves and often will lend clues as to soil types. To begin, get an old Mason jar or something similar. Pick out some of your favorite dirt, spread it on a newspaper and let it dry. Be sure to take out any trash, roots and rocks. Crush up the lumps or clods and make everything as fine as possible.

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Jay Smith, NR&P Intern

As an agricultural producer, science plays a large role in your operation. Have you ever wondered where you can find these studies? A fast, free, and easy way to find the science behind these studies is Google Scholar. You can access this database with a computer and internet access. By using this database you can stay in front of any new studies and methods used to manage range lands, range improvements, or any other projects.

There is a wealth of knowledge on the internet these days including peer-reviewed studies. The Google Scholar application makes this a very simple and quick task. First you will need to search for Google Scholar on your search engine. Once the browser retrieves the list of websites simply click on Google Scholar. The website will have a search box in the middle of the screen; under the box are filters you can use to complete your search. The first one will be articles and this will help when you search for scientific studies or articles. The next filters case law to search for legal documents.

The next step is to type in key words dealing with the topic you are researching. For example, if you want to find studies dealing with grazing on riparian areas you would type “grazing” and “riparian.” Once you have the terms in the search box hit enter. This will bring up studies having to do with these terms and a brief

summary of each one. On the left hand side there will be a date entry box that you can use to filter the studies by date. If you are only interested in studies from a certain time, you can input that time frame.

Once you filtered the studies by date, you can begin searching and identifying applicable studies. Under each study are blue hyperlinks and these can be used to retrieve a citation and save the study to your personal library. The citation given can be copied and pasted into a document if you are going to be using it in comments or any other work. You can also save the study in your own personal library. This can be extremely helpful if you are writing multiple sets of comments or if you want to check the study at a later time.

After you save a study to your library you can then create labels for each document. Simply click on a saved study and then click on “create label,” this brings up a text box to type in any keywords you like. Each document can have multiple labels. For instance, if you have ten studies on grazing you would label all of them with a “grazing” label. If one is dealing with riparian areas, then you would label it “riparian” also. This allows you to keep track of the studies you have cited and also makes for quick reference in the future. ✦

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.wyo.gov/divisions/nrp>



CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Keep Your Permit From Falling Through The Cracks

Justin Williams Senior Policy Analyst

Developing strong working relationships takes time. Establishing trust may take even longer. Both are vital when federal grazing permittees work with their range specialist on their given allotments. Nothing is more frustrating than when a permittee finds out their range specialist has accepted another position, leaving a vacancy. This vacancy creates a void, not only in the relationship, but in time and energy spent to convey the history, project development, and data collection. Regardless of the reason for the range specialist leaving, it's in the permittees' hands to ensure consistency between range specialists, managers, biologists, or other staff.

One of the best ways to ensure consistency between staff is to keep good records and make sure the permit files are comprehensive and complete. Permittees can meet with the current range specialist prior to their leaving to ensure the permit file is ready for their replacement.

Once you are aware the agency has filled the position, take the initiative and make an appointment to meet the new range specialist. Lunch is a great opportunity to get to know each other. Use this as an opportunity to give some ranch history, and then follow this up with a brief meeting in the agency office. Permittees might bring a list of priorities to the new range specialist to keep from falling through the cracks.

The list of priorities could include proposed range improvement projects such as fences or water developments. When a new staff member starts their position, sometimes projects still in the idea stage or needing analyzed get lost in the shuffle. Permittees can bring meeting minutes, maps, or other documentation to the new range specialist.

Grant projects are another priority permittees may want to ensure are on the radar screen of the

new range specialist. Grant projects are often written and implemented over a period of years. These grants may also have reporting deadlines. Permittees can ensure the new range specialist is aware of the grant, what the grant money pays for, ensure the project moves forward, and report deadlines are met.

A final recommendation is to ensure the new range specialist is aware of any nuances or verbal agreements to the permit. A range specialist hired midway through the grazing season may read the Annual Use Plan and have questions or concerns. Unique circumstances, such as a change in rotation due to drought or fire, are important for the range specialist to know.

Each range specialist is different with varying levels of experience, expertise, and personalities. Permittees will have to adjust to meet the needs of the new range specialist. In some cases, this "new blood" is a breath of fresh air. Turn the unfortunate circumstance into a positive by establishing a good working relationship with the staff member, and ensuring your permit doesn't fall through the cracks. ✦



Photo courtesy of Vicki Gibson

WLCI AWARDS OUTSTANDING LEADERS

Justin Caudill, Ag Program Coordinator

On July 23, 2014 during the Executive Committee (EC) meeting of the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) in Rock Springs, the board recognized several individuals and groups for the outstanding leadership and participation with the WLCI mission. I would like to share with you the two “Youth Awards” presented for their Conservation Actions by Don Simpson (State Director for BLM).

Mrs. Baas (Teacher at Green River High School) has partnered with the City of Green River, Parks and Recreation, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s (WGFD) efforts to control Russian olive and Tamarisk along the Green River. Mrs. Baas took her students out of the classroom and into the great outdoors to collect data for “real world” applications and implications. Her students collected data and information relevant to controlling nonnative plant species on the Green River. The students entered the field data into spreadsheets and provided the final products to the WGFD. The WGFD uses this information to direct the City of Green River where to apply herbicide on the regrowth of invasive species.



Mr. Ben Hansen, Boy Scout Troop Leader and Eagle Scouts

Mr. Hansen and the Eagle Scouts helped to maintain sage-grouse populations through their efforts associated with four sage-grouse fence marking projects and one wildlife monitoring project. Three of the four sage-grouse fence marking projects involved producing and hanging markers on 24 miles of newly constructed fence bordering the northern boundary of the Jim Bridger Mine property. Additionally the scout troop applied for and received a grant for \$2,700 from the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust to purchase material for the project. The fourth fence marker project and a wildlife monitoring effort were conducted within the BLM’s Sublette Grazing Allotment where 2.5 miles of fence markers were hung on newly constructed fence, and with the help of the Scouts, transects were located and set up to monitor sage grouse use through biyearly sage grouse pellet counts. ✦



Mrs. Allison Baas and Green River High School Students



Lucy Pauley, Mediation Coordinator

You've read here about agricultural mediation in Wyoming, in the areas of farm credit, USFS grazing permits, USDA program issues like disaster relief, crop insurance and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) issues. Perhaps you will not need mediation in these circumstances, but the Mediation Program is available for a wide variety of issues that you haven't considered before.

Two neighbors share a road that runs through one neighbor's property. Road maintenance and gates being left open have been an issue in the past. The neighbors have very different communication styles and have had trouble talking to each other. After another argument about loose livestock and a suggestion from their local county extension agent, the neighbors decide to sit down with a mediator to try to work out their concerns.

A brother and two sisters are the beneficiaries of their mother's estate, which includes the family ranch. The ranch isn't large enough to support all three families and only one sister wants to stay on the ranch. The siblings cannot agree on a fair division of the property. All three have hired attorneys but agree to try mediation in the hopes of finding a solution before heading to court. With the attorneys participating in the mediation session, the parties work out an agreement that all sides believe is fair yet allows the sister the opportunity to stay on the ranch.

An oil and gas development company has leased the mineral rights on a parcel of private land. The parcel is split estate, and the surface rights are owned by a local ranch family. Before development can begin, the energy company needs to negotiate a surface use agreement with the private landowner. Mediation is offered through the Surface Owner Accommodations Act (W.S. 30-5-401) and is also a

component of the Wyoming Energy Strategy (available online at <http://energy.wyo.gov/energy-strategy/strategic-themes/efficient-effective-regulation>). Both sides agree to enter into mediation to further discuss the landowner's concerns about resource protection and the energy company's interest in starting the project on time.

An irrigation supply company sells a truckload of irrigation pipe to a local ag producer. After installing the pipe, the producer discovers a few problems with the equipment and tries to talk to the supplier about ordering replacement pieces. The producer also holds off final payment while the negotiations are taking place. The irrigation supplier refutes the claim that the damages occurred during shipping and requests payment in full. The supplier also decides to offer mediation to the producer in the hopes of coming up with a plan for the invoice to be paid without having to involve other entities.

In each of these examples, the goal of mediation is to help the parties talk about the situation and brainstorm solutions that meet the needs of both sides. The use of mediation in Wyoming is not limited to these examples. †

You can find out more about mediation for other agricultural and natural resource related issues on our website at <http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp/mediation-program>. If you are involved in a situation that may benefit from mediation, please call us at (307) 777-8788 or email lucy.pauley@wyo.gov to get the process started.

Agriculture Producer Research Grant Program

Reissued for 2014-2015

Chris Wichmann, Manager

The Legislature provided the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) with \$200,000 of grant funding for Wyoming's producers to use and benefit from. The Agriculture Producer Research Grant Program (APRGP) 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 provide applied research or solutions to mitigate these issues, by providing knowledge or agriculture practices to enhance the natural resource base, economic viability of agriculture operations, and/or the quality of life for agricultural producers in Wyoming.

The first Request for Proposal was released in July and applications will be accepted until August 29, 2014.

To qualify for this grant;

- The projects should either be performed by agriculture producers or include agriculture producers as partners.

- The projects should truly be applied agriculture research projects and the research has not been performed before.
- The projects must include a researcher or educational entity.
- The projects must include a thorough outreach and educational component to the project.

The WDA is excited about this opportunity for Wyoming agriculture 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 view our website at <http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp/aprg-program> or contact the Natural Resource and Policy Division at 307-777-7323.

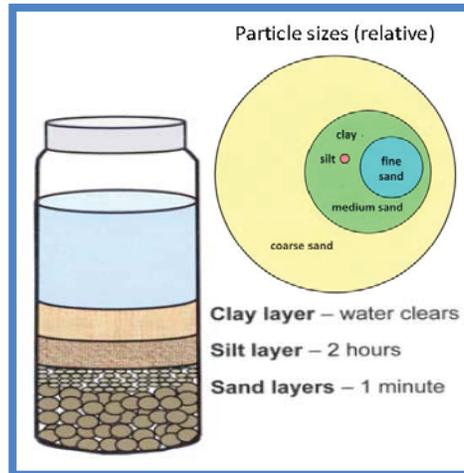


Americans with Disabilities Act

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

Dirt (continued from page 1)

Fill your jar about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way with soil and add water until it is $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Add a teaspoon of non-foam dish soap and screw the lid on tight. Shake the jar for ten or fifteen minutes to break everything apart. Find a good spot to put the jar for two or three days and don't mess with it. The different parts of your soil will settle according to size with larger particles at the bottom. Mark the depth of the



different layers (sand after 1 minute, silt after 2 hours and clay after a few days – when the water is clear). To determine percent of sand, silt and clay divide the thickness of the layer by the total thickness of all layers. Now use your calculated percentages to approximate your soil texture on the soil triangle. ✦

Find more information at:
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mgl/gardennotes/214.html>.

Rangeland Health Assessment Program New Funding for 2014-2015

Chris Wichmann, Manager

The Wyoming Rangeland Health Assessment Program (RHAP) is now in its fourth year of funding RHAP projects. The Legislature has again supported the valuable program by increasing the grant funding from \$200,000 to \$300,000, to be spent in the 2014-2015 biennium. We have seen over 1.5 million acres currently enrolled in the program.

RHAP was developed to assist grazing permittees and private landowners monitor the lands to help ensure and develop management strategies to achieve rangeland health. The funds are to help build relationships between producers and land management agencies, participate in joint cooperative monitoring, assist in future permitting or NEPA needs, and most importantly cooperatively develop a long range plan and/or a comprehensive Monitoring Plan.

It is crucial to the success of this program and the success of an individual project to ensure that the permittees and land management agencies are cooperating in the monitoring and the development of the Monitoring Plan. The projects should focus on short-term goals (annual monitoring), but also on the long-term goal of

continued joint cooperative monitoring well beyond the project funding.

Requests for Proposals are being accepted throughout the biennium. If you have any questions or an interest in the program please contact the Natural Resource and Policy Division at 307-777-7323 or check out the webpage <http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp/rangeland-health>. ✦

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Upcoming Events

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|------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| August 15: | WY Board of Agriculture Meeting, Douglas | October 14: | WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call |
| August 27: | “Mediator Bias” webinar | November 3-6: | WY Weed & Pest Conference, Rock Springs |
| September 3: | Conservation District Area V Meeting, Afton | November 6-9: | Annual Tri-State Wool Growers Convention, Park City, UT |
| September 5: | Conservation District Area III Meeting, Worland | November 12: | WY Board of Agriculture Meeting, Sheridan |
| September 10: | Conservation District Area I Meeting, Buffalo | November 13-15: | Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Sheridan |
| September 11: | Conservation District Area II Meeting, Wheatland | November 18-20: | WY Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention, Sheridan |
| September 12: | Conservation District Area IV Meeting, Medicine Bow | November 19-20: | WY Society for Range Management Annual Meeting, Evanston |
| September 18-19: | WY Board of Agriculture Joint Meeting with WY Game & Fish Commission, Pinedale | December 1-3: | WY Stock Growers 2014 Winter Roundup, Casper |
| September 29-30: | UW/Ruckelshaus WY Collaborative Conference, Casper | December 4-6: | 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 Division at 307.777.7323 or michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov.

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