

# 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

## IN THIS ISSUE

- To Cull or Not To Cull*..... 1
- Drought: It Is Still Here* ..... 2
- Conservation & Wyoming Roots*..... 3
- Drought To Continue* ..... 4
- Producer Tools for Managing Conflicts* ..... 5
- Document, Document, Document: Taking A Proactive Approach to Public Lands Grazing*..... 6
- Upcoming Events*.....8

## Quotable Quotes

*"The mere brute pleasure of reading - the sort of pleasure a cow must have in grazing.*

*-Gilbert K. Chesterton*

\*Banner photo courtesy of Vicki Gibson

# To Cull or Not To Cull *that is the question.....*

Jessica Crowder, Senior Policy Analyst

Every producer knows that culling your cattle herd is an important aspect of most ranching operations. But have you carefully considered how and why you are culling certain animals? There are several different reasons producers cull cows, including improving production, finances, marketing and the environment. Having a plan for culling will allow you to adjust quickly to cattle markets, increase production and respond to environmental conditions such as drought. Producers must carefully consider their management and business objectives. If you keep accurate records or know your herd well, this will greatly assist in choosing which cattle to cull. Below are just a few of the many strategies producers use when determining how to cull their herd.

requirements than an older, pregnant cow and may cost more to over-winter. However, it also costs more to carry a cow over in poor body condition. Heifers generally only increase in value, while a cow over 9 years old will soon begin to decrease in value.

There is no reason to keep a cow that raises poor calves, is consistently late calving (which may decrease weaning weights and cramp your management style) and is dry or open. You may also wish to cull cows with bad teeth, poor body condition or poor structural soundness. Some producers have more specific culling strategies based on their specific management style and business plan. For example, some producers

Continued on page 7

Cattle are most productive between age 4 and age 9, so culling animals outside of this age range is one of the most obvious culling strategies. If you raise your own replacement heifers, your options increase and your decisions get a little tougher. A first calf heifer has higher nutritional





Larry Bentley, Eastern Wyoming Consultant

The severe drought of 2012 covered 2,245 counties in thirty-nine states. All of Wyoming's counties, except Teton County, were included in this count. The 2,245 counties were considered as either being in a D-2 (severe) or D-3 (extreme) condition class.

In January of 2013, USDA had listed 597 counties in Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, New Mexico, Nevada, South Carolina, Texas and Utah as a D-2 (severe) drought.

USDA says these counties received little or no moisture for the last eight consecutive weeks, based on monitoring done by the U.S. Drought Monitor.

In 2012, the USDA introduced several programs through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to help farmers and ranchers in designated drought counties. Some of these programs were low interest operation loans, flexible insurance programs, and the release of 2.8 million acres of CRP land for grazing and haying. Unfortunately, most of these programs gave little or no help to drought stricken Wyoming producers.

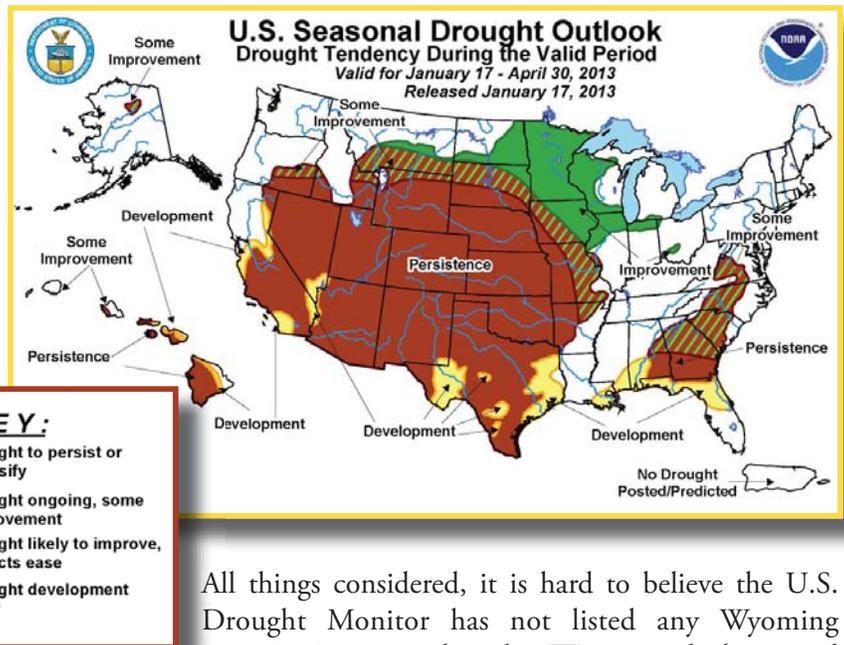
2012 was one of the driest years in U.S. history. It will take many years of average moisture for many of the drought stricken counties to return to normal. This is especially true in mid-western states where crop success depends on rainfall and soil moisture.

Western states are luckier, as 80% of our crop moisture comes from mountain snowfall, and even with a normal snow season we can recover much quicker.

Wyoming and Eastern Montana rangelands have the ability to recover from extreme droughts in one season of normal moisture, if it comes in April and May, according to a

study done by range specialists at Montana's Livestock and Range Research Center near Miles City. NOAA predicts Wyoming's drought conditions will continue through early April.

The NRCS snow report shows 2012/2013 winter in northwest Wyoming received eighty-two to ninety-three percent of normal moisture; northeast Wyoming has received seventy to eighty-six percent of normal moisture; southwest Wyoming received eighty to eighty-seven percent of normal moisture; and southeast Wyoming received fifty-six to sixty-seven percent of normal. There is an area of central Wyoming including most of Natrona and Converse counties only receiving twenty-seven percent of normal winter moisture.



All things considered, it is hard to believe the U.S. Drought Monitor has not listed any Wyoming counties in severe drought. We can only hope and pray Wyoming receives additional mountain snowfall and spring moisture comes at the right time, and in the amounts needed for normal grazing, but as of now, most ranchers are preparing for another below normal moisture grazing season. † For more information from the U.S. Drought Monitor, visit <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

# CONSERVATION & WYOMING ROOTS

Justin Caudill, Ag Program Coordinator

The last week of January, 2013 I had the opportunity to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX. This was quite a privilege as in my current role with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture I have the pleasure of working with the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) and the thirty-four Conservation Districts (CD) spread across our state. The privilege for me originates from the common mission these entities share; providing leadership for the conservation of soil and water, promoting the wise use of those soil and water resources, preserving and/or enhancing wildlife habitat and sustainable agriculture.

The convention offered a vast range of topics and issues from other states on a national level. Topics included; immigration reform, where Congress is, on a new Farm Bill, soil amendments-crop rotation and water quality, Certainty Programs, cooperative agency & coordination training, Master Farmer Programs, Discovery (demonstration) Farms, precision conservation and others. This being my first NACD convention, the most impressive thing I learned was how well Wyoming,

through the WACD and CD supervisors and employees, is represented and respected on a national level.

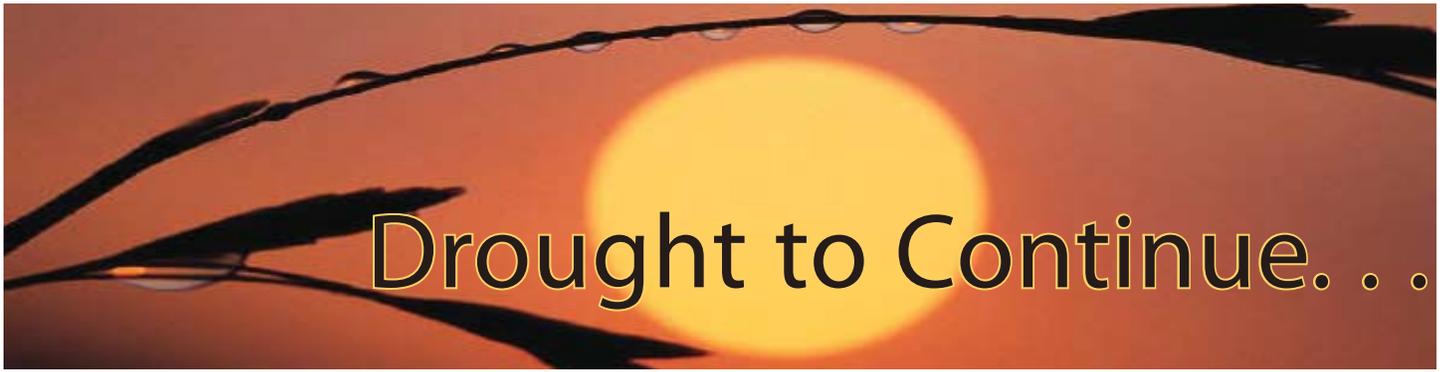
During the NACD Reception and Awards Dinner the WACD and Wyoming Conservation Districts were affirmed as being one of a handful of states to not only fully pay their yearly dues to NACD, but also as being one of thirteen states recognized for completing requisite district supervisors trainings. This was Wyoming's third consecutive year to attain and be recognized for this level of supervisors training. Another event at the dinner having a Wyoming link involved three conservation-education project presentations, all three coming from different states, one being from Wyoming.

Continued on page 7



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>



Chris Wichmann, Manager

Last year went down as the driest and warmest year on record (since 1895) for Wyoming. The combined heat and lack of precipitation created horrible drought conditions across the state and added to the many fires and the extreme fire danger that we saw. A recent drought monitor released on January 3rd showed worsening drought conditions across east-central Wyoming and slightly improved drought conditions across portions of the western and northwestern portion of the state.

The BLM field offices are currently monitoring precipitation, vegetation and water availability in areas suffering from the drought. They are also preparing to initiate their annual operating plans/meetings in the near future in preparation for this coming grazing season. These meetings will discuss planning and preparation for grazing management on each specific allotment and will likely include a thorough discussion on how drought conditions may be addressed during the grazing season. Based on the 2012 grazing season, changes to grazing plans mostly consisted of changes in duration on allotment/pasture or time of use. Drought letters are anticipated to go out to permittees in early February to prepare permittees for the upcoming grazing season.

We encourage each permittee to be proactive in the management of their livestock operations and management of their allotments. We would like to throw out additional thoughts for you to consider when planning for this grazing season.

- Prepare for the worst case scenario. Many producers are preparing for voluntary measures in case the drought continues, such as reducing their herd.
- Start early communication with Federal range staff. Communication with range staff is crucial, in both

directions, to be able to understand and make sound decisions on an allotment.

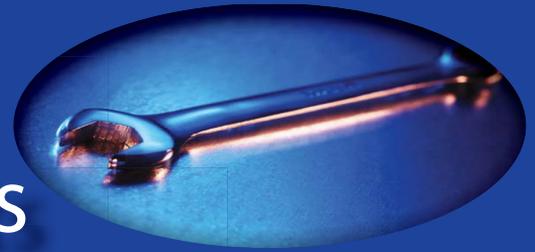
- Participate in allotment utilization monitoring with range staff. By participating in monitoring efforts, you will see how they are making determinations on an allotment and have consistent dialog with range staff on potential timing and consequences of drought conditions.
- Prepare drought contingency plans. Many field offices will accept drought contingency plans if presented to them prior to the event. Drought contingency plans will identify mitigation measures or alternatives for the Authorizing Officer to consider when making a decision on if to remove grazing on an allotment. This may consist of proposals to haul water, provide supplemental feed, temporary fence to protect sensitive resources, providing herding, adjusting grazing plans, etc. All these types of alternatives may help you stay on an allotment longer, if the parties agree.
- Be aware - the BLM has emergency response abilities within their regulations considered on a case-by-case situation. This does not exclude them from analysis of impacts but does allow the Authorizing Officer the ability to do things on an allotment in case of an emergency.
- Identify and propose rangeland improvement projects for the allotment to protect and improve the allotment and rangeland health. This could include additional water (wells, tanks, reservoirs), spring development, fences (temporary and permanent), or other improvements to protect and improve the allotment.

These are just a few additional actions to consider when trying to manage your livestock operation in another year of drought. †

#### Americans with Disabilities Act

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

# Producer Tools for Managing Conflicts



Lucy Pauley, Mediation Program Coordinator

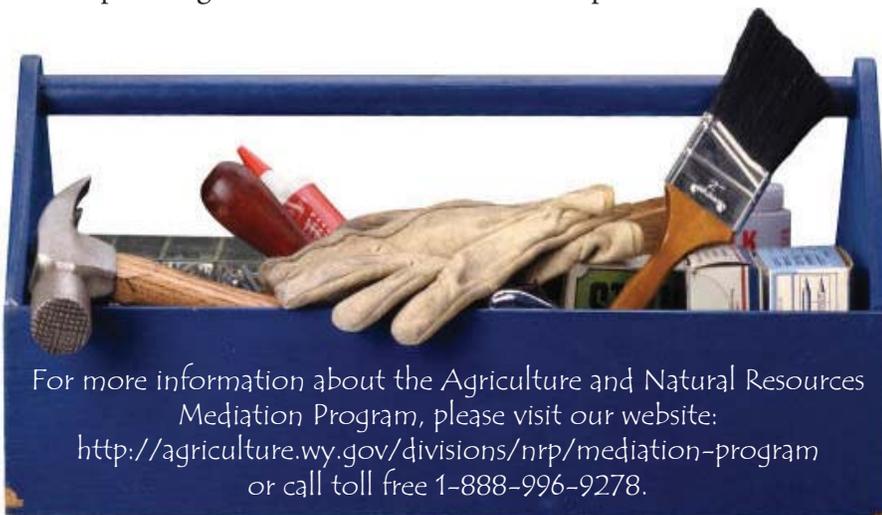
In this newsletter, you've read about the many different uses of mediation in agricultural and natural resource issues. Bringing in a neutral third-party (the mediator) can help disputing parties work through a conflict and develop an agreement that everyone can live with. Sometimes you might encounter a situation that isn't quite ready for mediation, perhaps it can be resolved on its own. Other times, you might find that there are issues that aren't suitable for mediation. Besides mediation, there are several other tools that can help producers to manage and resolve conflicts.

**Negotiation:** Effective negotiation skills can go a long way towards helping you manage a situation and preventing a conflict from escalating. Integrated negotiation, based on the principles in Fisher and Ury's text "Getting to Yes," provides a style encouraging you to see both sides of the story when you are in a conflict and to seek a mutually acceptable solution. The principles in Getting to Yes provide a framework for all kinds of negotiations, from buying a used car to having a tough conversation with a family member. The UW Ruckelshaus Institute periodically offers training on negotiating natural resource issues. To view their upcoming summer schedule, visit <http://www.uwyo.edu/haub/ruckelshaus-institute/events-trainings/summer-workshop-series/index.html>.

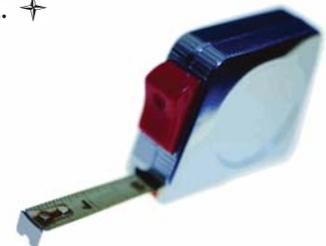
**Facilitation:** Perhaps you are a member of a local non-profit board not agreeing on a direction or strategic plan. Maybe a large extended family has a basic estate plan in place but needs help finishing the conversation and giving everyone the opportunity to voice their opinion. Facilitation is the use of a neutral third-party to assist a group in understanding their common objectives and helping them develop a plan to achieve their goals through collaborative decision-making. In Wyoming, facilitators are available statewide and there are several organizations who provide trained, experienced facilitators to assist in a wide variety of issues.

**Arbitration:** Similar to a traditional court process, arbitration is the use of a third-party to evaluate the merits of each party's claim. Arbitration can be binding or non-binding. If you are in a dispute and seeking arbitration, your attorney can assist you in finding an arbitrator with experience in your specific issue.

**Other Legal Tools:** Some conflicts are best handled by the traditional legal system. It is important to have an effective attorney guiding you through the process. To find an attorney, talk with your friends and neighbors about who they use and recommend. You can also visit the Wyoming State Bar's website at <http://www.wyomingbar.org/index.html> to search for attorneys in your area. ✦



For more information about the Agriculture and Natural Resources Mediation Program, please visit our website:  
<http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp/mediation-program>  
or call toll free 1-888-996-9278.



# Document, Document, Document

## Taking a Proactive Approach to Public Lands Grazing

Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst

We've all heard the sayings "it's your word against theirs," or "hindsight is 20/20" or "a picture is worth a thousand words." No matter what the occasion, we all have been in precarious situations where we wish somehow we could turn the clock back to change how we handled something. If only we made a copy, wrote down what was discussed in a conversation, or took a quick picture. The world we live in is ever changing and as much as we all want the handshake to seal a deal, unless it's documented, we cannot guarantee the outcome of sometimes life-altering decisions.

Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, or US Fish and Wildlife Service make decisions everyday impacting livestock operators utilizing public lands to graze their livestock. These decisions may include implementing new policies on historical trailing routes, changing the number of Animal Unit Months (AUMs) during a permit renewal, or managing livestock in areas with grizzly bears or wolves.

The following are just a few examples of how livestock operators grazing on public lands can proactively document to protect their permits and livelihoods. Permit files include:

- **Allotment File:** Include maps, historical information, NEPA documents, monitoring plans, annual reports, inspection reports, activity plans, objectives, goals, and range improvement documentation.
- **Vegetative Monitoring Sites:** Make copies of data sheets, take pictures of the sites and transects, provide weather information, include unique situations or sightings, request analysis reports.
- **Meetings:** Take notes in meetings and request

meeting minutes: include who was there, who agreed to do something, deadlines for the task, and specific details affecting you personally.

- **Formal Requests:** Keep an electronic and a hard copy, request a response
- **E-mails:** Include: "request return receipt," ask for a response, keep a copy, carbon copy others
- **Important Documents:** Send by certified mail and keep the receipt
- **Field Conversations:** Keep a note pad in your truck, write down the time, location, who said what
- **Phone Conversations:** Have a note pad or sticky notes handy to write down the time and who said what. Follow up phone conversations by email to confirm what was agreed.

Documenting may seem tedious and time consuming, but it just may be the information on a yellow sticky note to keep something from drastically affecting your permit. ✦

### 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  
Larry Bentley, Eastern WY Consultant.....867-2555



.....

## Cull (continued from page 1)

cull any animal that needs assistance calving, even first-calf heifers. Others may choose to get rid of cows with a bad disposition.

You may also consider natural resource management when culling. If keeping cattle out of riparian areas is a concern in your operation, you may cull those animals that spend all day, every day in riparian areas. Likewise, if an animal tends to use steeper slopes or avoid poisonous plants, these are animals you may want

to keep, since they will be passing those good habits on to their offspring.

Each producer must determine their own culling strategy. Spending time to think about and outline your strategy will improve your herd, your management, your marketing, your natural resources and your bottom line. As singer/songwriter Corb Lund says “Everything is better with some cows around.” Just make sure you are keeping the right cows around! †



Photo credit Edwardo Amorim - creative commons.org

.....

## Conservation (continued from page 3)

During the dinner the audience was informed of a nationwide request to CD for conservation - education related projects. This request for projects generated eighteen proposals from around the U.S. competing for a ten-thousand dollar grant. A review committee had ranked the eighteen projects and carried forward the top three for audiences' consideration. Upon viewing the three project presentations the audience was asked to vote for the project providing the largest opportunity promoting conservation- education. Wyoming's "Pathway to Water Quality" Project was the big winner, our own Michelle Huntington, District Manager for Converse County Conservation District accepted the award for the project.

Michelle provided an inspired impromptu speech explaining

that the "Pathway to Water Quality" project applies innovative management practices to protect water quality, reduce erosion, control invasive plant species, enhance a wetland and establish native grasses and trees. The project was designed to provide major benefits in reducing runoff, increasing infiltration, creating wetland habitat while serving as an exceptional educational site. This project has been commenced on the Wyoming State Fair Grounds, which hosts up to 40-50,000 visitors each year. †

A graphic with a light blue background and a green leaf-like shape on the right. The text reads: "Interested? For more information on the Pathway to Water Quality project please visit the Wyoming Natural Resources Foundation web-site at: <http://wynaturalresourcefoundation.com/>". The text "Pathway to Water Quality" is written in a cursive font above the leaf shape.



# Upcoming Events

February 25-26:	WLCI Executive Committee Meeting, Cheyenne	May 13-16:	Basic Mediation Training, Casper
February 28:	Legislature Ends	June 11:	WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call
March 8-9:	Wyoming Farmers Market Association Meeting, Laramie	June 5-8:	WY Cattle Industry Convention & Trade Show, Cheyenne
March 12:	WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call	June 11-12:	WACD Spring Board Meeting, Douglas
April 8-10:	WY Board of Agriculture Meeting, TBD	June 25-26:	WACD Module III Water Quality Training, TBA
April 16-18:	WACD Module II Water Quality Training, Lander	July 9:	WY Board of Agriculture Conference Call
April 29-30:	Collaboration in Natural Resources: A Wyoming Forum, sponsored by the UW Ruckelshouse Institute, Lander	August 10-17:	Wyoming State Fair "Buckles, Boots, and Blue Ribbons," Douglas

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).

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

The Corner Post