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Guardians of the Range

Dedicated to the Multiple Use of Public Lands & the American Way of Life

Newsletter No. 91

November 2011

Annual Meeting

February 4, 2012 10:00 - 2:30

Worland

Save
the
Date

Board Positions

The Board of Directors is accepting nominations of members who might like to serve on the board.

If you would like to be considered for such a position, or know of a fellow member who might make a good candidate, please contact

Dana Kerns, President at 655-9539 or Bill Greer, Vice President at 272-3723 for more information. Terms of service begin February 2012.

Got Grouse?

~ by Rory Karhu

District Conservationist, Park County
 USDA-NRCS

I know what you are thinking – why is everyone talking about sage grouse these days, and when are we going to stop focusing efforts on single species management and look at the big picture?! The first time I heard about the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) new Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI), I too wondered (perhaps aloud!) if the initiative had merit, and would result in addressing any of the impacts that the US Fish & Wildlife Service mentioned in their listing decision. I decided to put some effort into learning the details about the initiative, as a huge part of my job is to see what programs might work for Park County producers.

Please see **Grouse** on page 2



Joe Alexander SNF Forest Supervisor

Comments on Permittees & How Coming into the Middle of SNF Forest Plan Revision is Like Grabbing a Tiger by the Tail

~ by Echo Renner

Joe Alexander, Forest Supervisor of the Shoshone National Forest (SNF) is enjoying the challenges and rewards of his first year on the job. Alexander began the position in November 2010, moving his wife and two children from Minnesota to Cody, Wyoming.

“The SNF has been out of this world. It’s a great mix of multiple use for grazing, timber management, minerals and recreation.” Alexander says. He accepted the position, “because it’s a good place and a great resource. I’m interested in the back country and issues associated with carnivores. The SNF has good personnel - about 95 permanent employees, and another 95 part-time summer employees to assist with seasonal and field work. I’m enjoying my work tremendously.”

Please see **Alexander** on page 2

“A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both.” ~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

Alexander continued from page 1

Challenges with the position include distance and communication. "The SNF forest is spread out, and it's over four hours to the farthest district. Some of the communities we serve are Cody, Meeteetse, Clark, Wapiti, Dubois, Lander, and then Thermopolis to a lesser degree," Alexander explains. "The federal government has put a cap on travel, cutting it about 60%. It's not like we are traveling on extravagant trips - we travel to work, so that makes it difficult to have a presence in all of those communities."

Alexander says taking over as Forest Supervisor during the middle of the forest plan revision is "like grabbing a tiger by the tail." "When I started, I was told we were at a certain point in the process, but later learned that wasn't where our cooperators thought we were. I have pressure from my bosses to speed up and get it done, and pressure from cooperators to slow down and get it right."

Of livestock grazing permittees, Alexander says he believes good communication and progressive thinking generally characterize successful permittees. "The ones who are successful are the ones who pay attention to and understand range science, range improvements, animal science and herding. They are also open to some level of change."

"Some of the biggest challenges permittees face nationwide are having a public that is less and less connected to their environment, and nature in general, and which is not as open to multiple use-type principles. There is a lot of info out there telling how bad the environment is, and public perception of grazing on public land is a big issue for permittees to face. There are environmental groups out there that have been adversarial, but may down the road share a common interest. We have their attention. Anyone who is educated on predator management fully understands it's better to have a bear dealing with livestock, than dealing with a subdivision once a ranch is subdivided."

The biggest issue facing local permittees is the large predator problem. Some areas are worse than others, but bears are now moving into the Wind River and Wyoming ranges as their population increases."

Alexander encourages permittees to be proactive with their range cons in regard to communication and monitoring. "Don't wait for them to contact you."

The SNF currently utilizes 67 livestock grazing allotments.

Alexander's background serves him well as Forest Supervisor. He graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in forestry with a range emphasis in 1993. Since then, he's worked in a variety of positions on forests in Montana, North Dakota, Nevada, Washington and Minnesota.

Joe Alexander can be reached in Cody at 527.6241. ★

Grouse continued from page 1

Now that I have a full field season under my belt working on several large SGI contracts, and have a better understanding of this program and how it can benefit the producers of Park County, I can tell you I am now fully behind this new initiative. I see a real opportunity for improving rangeland habitat where grouse exist that is not only good for the bird, but good for the livestock, and ultimately the producer's bottom line. After all, the goal is the same; healthy, sustainable rangelands that provide a place to live and thrive for grouse while providing sustainable forage base for livestock.

First and foremost, this program requires substantial, quality vegetation monitoring on all rangeland pastures that are part of the grazing operation. This is conducted by NRCS personnel the first season, then monitoring responsibility is taken over by the producer or a contractor for three more years. That is four years of good data that will provide the manager with the tools to develop a grazing plan based on real production and species composition data, during the contract, and hopefully beyond. This is the kind of information that many producers would like to have on their operation anyway.

Keep in mind that the SGI contract requires that NRCS write the initial grazing plan based on the data collected the first year, and it's written to assure adequate plant stubble annually on at least 20% of the available sage grouse habitat during the critical nesting period. If the grazing plan is followed and annual vegetative monitoring confirms adequate cover, the producer is eligible for a significant per-acre incentive payment for each of three years.

In addition to the monitoring and grazing plan development, other management changes can be implemented as part of SGI to help offset potential threats to sage grouse, such as cheat grass control, stabilization of head-cuts in wet areas, re-seeding of critical habitat, water development, removal of old structures that provide perching sites for raptors, marking of fences to reduce sage grouse collisions, changing haying patterns to reduce mortality of chicks, and ensuring stock water tanks have escape ramps. Since this initiative is striving to reduce potential threats to sage grouse that are within human control, it should help ensure the population is maintained or improved and does not become a federally listed species.

Keep in mind, this initiative is only available to producers with significant rangeland sage grouse habitat, preferably within sage grouse core breeding areas, as defined by the WY Executive Department, Ex. Order 2011-5. For more information, please stop by your local USDA Service Center or call your local NRCS District Conservationist.

Rory Karhu can be reached in Powell at 307.754.9301. ★



Direct from the Director: The Rule of Law Becomes the Chaos of Regulation

~ by Kathleen Jachowski

One of the most repeated themes of Americans (elected and unelected) right now is that of far too many rules and regulations from every corner of our government. It seems to be an accurate assessment of an overbearing government as the cry of early colonialists about too much taxation.

This country has a love affair with passing legislation. A consequence of passing laws is that one must then write rules and regulations to implement them. This is where we move from the Rule of Law into the Chaos of Regulation.

Almost always thousands of words are used by the various agencies in writing the regulations to implement a new law. I wish I could find one law with rules and regulations shorter than the law itself.

Right now, our nation (private and public) finds itself dragged to an almost total stop when trying to conduct business as a result of too many regulations, conflicting regulations, confusing regulations and obstructive regulations.

The Environmental Protection Agency is frequently in today's spotlight. Regulations relative to the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act have driven some utility companies to announce the closing of their doors. Some states are on the verge of simply defying the absurdity of so many regulations just to conduct business.

Things have gotten so bad now that new legislation is being proposed to bring this spreading disease under control. Indeed, there must be a limitation on, and improvement of, the rules and regulations or the United States will bring its own very slow progress to a complete halt.

Solving this problem of excessive rules and regulations is worth the time and effort to do so. We must be very determined in our efforts to bring to light examples of absurd and unfair rules and regulations.

Let your elected officials know of such examples by citing the rule or regulation you are dealing with, and how it is negatively affecting your operation.

Kathleen

Kathleen Jachowski, Executive Director
307.587.3723 guardians@hughes.net

CRAIG THOMAS GUARDIANS OF THE RANGE ENDOWMENT

Supporting this endowment is a wonderful tax exempt way to show your support for the Guardians' effort, or to honor a family member or friend. We want to have a sustainable financial resource base to achieve our goals and objectives.

For more details, please contact a board member or Kathleen Jachowski (307)587-3723 or guardians@hughes.net.

Join Guardians of the Range

LIVESTOCK OPERATORS

\$100.00 up to 50 head of cattle
\$2.00 / head 51 to 1,500 cattle
40 cents / head for sheep

BUSINESSES, INDIVIDUALS & ASSOCIATIONS

without federal grazing permits:

\$25 - \$100	WRANGLER
\$250	RANGE RIDER
\$500	TOP HAND
\$1,000	GUARDIAN of the RANGE

Fairness Fee: One-time \$500 fee

Applicable to any new livestock operator membership that needs help within 90 days of joining the Guardians of the Range.

The Board of Directors recently voted to adopt a special one-time \$500 Fairness Fee (FF), or 'catch up fee, to cover situations where a permittee chooses to join only because they need help on an immediate issue. The FF recognizes the time, money and effort of past supporters who made it possible for an organization like the Guardians to be right at the end of the telephone and ready to step in immediately to help. The FF is appropriate and respectful of the past and ongoing support and organizational vision of current members. The FF is payable concurrent with initial dues.

You may join on line:

www.GuardiansoftheRange.org

To pay by check, please make checks payable to:
Guardians of the Range
mail to:

Guardians of the Range, P.O. Box 472, Worland, WY 82401

Guardians of the Range

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Pasture Needed

Guardian member seeks pasture starting in 2012. Interested in either short/long-term leasing for about 70 head of cows/calves

Please contact Pepper Fipps at Rafter Star Ranch
307-737-2680 or 702-501-4243.

A lasting gift idea!

As Christmas nears - as well as the deadline for tax-deductible contributions - why not consider a donation to the Guardians of the Range?

This can be done as a direct contribution to the Guardians of the Range, or to our Craig Thomas Guardians of the Range Endowment.

Either way, your special and thoughtful gift will help support and grow the efforts of this fine organization.



Corrections

We neglected to acknowledge in last month's newsletter the authors of the great summary of data on Environmental Litigation Fees. This fine investigative work was requested by the Western Legacy Alliance <https://westernlegacyalliance.org/> and uncovered by U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee (EPW) Ranking Member U. S. Senator Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma and EPW Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee Ranking Member U. S. Senator David Vitter of Louisiana from the Government Accountability Office.

~ ~ ~

Mr. Steve Dandero is the new Field Manager of the BLM's Wind River District. He oversees the Cody, Lander and Worland BLM field offices. In last month's newsletter, we incorrectly cited Mr. Richard Vander Voet as the Field Manager. WRONG! Richard Vander Voet heads up the BLM's Lander office.

So, there you have it - the right people in the right places. We welcome them both.

NOTE: The Guardians have invited Steve Dandero to speak at our annual meeting on February 4th.