



Guardians of the Range

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

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Microbial Control for Cheatgrass Researched

by Saige Albert

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and the *Wyoming Livestock Roundup*

Casper - As cheatgrass becomes a more prevalent problem in Wyoming and across the country, researchers throughout the nation are beginning to put an increased focus on methods to control the weed.

Soil Microbiologist Ann Kennedy of the USDA Agriculture Research Service's Land Management and Water Conservation Research Unit in Pullman, Washington has been working on bio-control methods for cheatgrass.

"I work on some interesting bacteria," Kennedy said in her presentation at the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council Fall Conference and Business meeting in Casper on November 7. "These bacteria have the ability to inhibit grass weeds."

Kennedy's work began when she was a post-doctorate student looking at trends in winter wheat.

"We found that early in the spring, we were seeing yellowing of winter wheat in depressions," she explained. "Plants don't all grow at the same rate, and we were curious what caused the yellowing."

They delved into the roots and soil to find a bacterium that was colonizing the roots of the plant.

We found that 90 percent of the roots of stunted plants were colonized with the bacteria," she said. "We thought if we can find those bacteria that selectively inhibit the roots, we can use them, and we did find this organism by selecting for them."

"The soil is alive," commented Kennedy. "We have a crew of bacteria in the soil working for us everyday, and the majority of soil microorganisms are beneficial."

Please see **Cheatgrass** on page 2

**Do we need a study to prove the
skinny on skinny 'wolf cows'?
I don't think so!**

Washington Considers Another Impact of Wolves: Skinny Cows

Washington ranchers who can show that wolves are making their cattle lose weight could get reimbursed under a new proposal. The rule before the WA Fish and Wildlife Commission would expand a compensation program for ranchers living in wolf country.

Washington's cattle ranchers aren't the first to complain about skinny livestock. Ranchers in Idaho and Oregon also say the reintroduction of wolves has made sheep and cattle move more and eat less.

That translates into the bottom line, says Dave Ware. He's the game manager with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. "The way that a rancher gets paid in the fall when they bring their cattle from the range is by weight — so much per pound," he said. Washington would be the first state in the Northwest to compensate ranchers for livestock weight loss — not just livestock killed by wolves.

But Suzanne Stone is skeptical. She's with the group Defenders of Wildlife. "Well, the weight loss claim has been made by a lot of ranchers. But as of yet, there's not been a study that actually has proven that weight loss occurs because of wolves," she said.

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissioners accepted public comment on the proposal at their meeting on Nov. 9.

The plan would also expand compensation for livestock loss to more types of animals — including herd dogs, llamas, alpacas and goats, even for noncommercial livestock owners. Top priority for compensation would go to people who take preventive measures.

This was first reported by the Northwest News Network. ★

**"There's a difference between knowing the path
and walking the path." ~ Anonymous**

Cheatgrass continued from page 1

She added that in selecting a bacterium for use as a bio-control mechanism, it was important that there was no inhibition of economically valuable crops or native plants. In order to accomplish that goal, the scientists utilize a labor-intensive selection system.

"We isolate the soil and bacteria in March, when they are most active," Kennedy explained. "They don't grow everywhere or all the time, and they are very selective."

Using a bioassay, they grow the bacteria, and Kennedy says, "If it doesn't inhibit a weed, we throw the bacteria away. We keep the ones that inhibit the weeds and bioassay against beneficial plants." The screening process puts the bacteria up against wheat, native plants and dicots, among others. "If it hurts an economically valuable or native plant, we get rid of it," Kennedy explained. "The ones that don't affect them, we keep."

In locating this particular bacteria, she noted that they started with over 10,000 bacteria isolates, ending with only about one percent that inhibit weeds but don't affect the beneficial plants. "It is a very arduous process," she said. "We make sure it doesn't have any antimicrobial or antifungal activity, and we make sure the genes are on the chromosomes so they don't transfer."

Screening also ensures that the product is ecologically safe, won't result in any residue and are only active at the intended times.

"We have a good match for bio-control now," she said. "We have a bacterium that inhibits root growth at cool temperatures."

The bacterium, a variety of *Pseudomonas*, thrives in cold soil temperatures, making them ideal to target cheatgrass species.

"Cheatgrass is such a problem because it has low temperature root growth," explained Kennedy. "There is a wonderful root mass that is being accumulated, and it grows further in the winter and starts earlier in the spring—that is why it is such an invasive plant."

In addition to cheatgrass, the same bacteria also targets jointed goat grass and medusa head, which are also important invasive species in the West.

The competitive advantage of these species is gained from their ability to produce vast root systems in cool-weather temperatures, which is when the bacterium is active. The bacterium essentially prevents root growth and does not allow seeds in the soil to send up shoots by entering the root system of the plant and producing a complex toxin. Because of their location inside the root of the plant, no toxins are released into the soil, making the product more environmentally safe.

"The thing is, we need the patience to wait a couple of years for the bacteria to really work," Kennedy explained of the organism. "We have to get this organism into the soil and growing in the soil before it does its thing." In trial work, the product took about four years before cheatgrass was nearly eliminated from the test plots.

Cheatgrass continued on page 4

NEW MEXICO FEDERAL LANDS COUNCIL

<http://nmflc.blogspot.com/>

Environmental group is denied fee award even where it successfully challenged agency decision

In *Western Watersheds Project v. Ellis*, 2012 DJDAR 13948 (2012), the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit decided a claim for attorney fees made by an environmental organization arising from grazing permit litigation.

In summary, Western Watersheds (WW), an environmental organization, sued the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) renewal of grazing permits in an area managed by BLM called the Jarbridge Resource Area. The district court concluded that the BLM failed to protect the environmental habitat in the area and issued an injunction against the grazing permits.

Based on the district court's ruling, the BLM and WW settled the litigation, including all issues relating to attorney fees to that point in time. Subsequent to the 2007 settlement, a severe wildfire erupted in the Jarbridge Resource Area which greatly changed the landscape of the Resource Area.

As a result, the BLM allowed grazing on unburned areas of the Resource Area. WW successfully challenged the post-fire grazing conditions and authorizations. WW then asked for attorney fees as the prevailing party pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA). The district court denied WW's motion. The Ninth Circuit affirmed the lower court's decision declining to grant fees.

The Ninth Circuit noted that under the EAJA, a prevailing party is generally entitled to fees against the government, unless the position of the government was "substantially justified." In making a call whether or not the government's position was "substantially justified," a court must look to both the government's position during litigation and to the agency action that the plaintiff's lawsuit was based on.

The Ninth Circuit concluded that the district court properly considered the reasonableness of the BLM's underlying decision to issue grazing authorizations after the fire. For that reason, this court was convinced that the district court correctly determined that the BLM was substantially justified in its position. The motion for fees under the EAJA was denied. ★

Looking for a Special Christmas Gift or Unique Way to Remember a Friend or Relative?

Have you considered a contribution to the Craig Thomas Guardians of the Range Endowment? It's special, tax deductible and part of a living legacy.



**Make checks payable to:
Guardians of the Range;
Note: Endowment. Mail to: GOR,
P.O. Box 472, Worland, WY 82401.**



by Kathleen Jachowski

Shoshone National Forest Plan Revision A final public request for NO MORE WILDERNESS PLEASE

The public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on this forest's plan revision will have closed by the time you are reading this newsletter. We have run a number of pieces and heads-up articles on this plan revision in an effort to inform readers of what was happening and how they could, and might want to, offer public comments.

There are few things more 'dry' or sleep inducing than environmental impact studies (EIS) or environmental assessments (EA). These characteristics have more to do with the need to comply with numerous laws and regulations than they do with the style of authorship.

However, imbedded throughout environmental documents, such as the draft EIS for the plan revision on the Shoshone National Forest is the framework of how and where you, as a member of the public, will be able to appreciate, utilize and access this forest for decades to come.

Many people in Wyoming operate under the misunderstanding that the Wyoming Wilderness Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-550) once and for all time settled the issue that there would be no more Wilderness designations within the State of Wyoming. That is totally incorrect.

What is correct is that first: the legislation applies only to the national forest system lands. It does not apply to Bureau of Land Management lands; second, there are three specific times when advocates have the legal right to push for more Wilderness - and any forest plan REVISION is one of those three times.

So, while it is legal for Wilderness proponents to advocate for such, up until the inks dries on the FINAL EIS of the forest plan revision, the Guardians of the Range would like to make a final public request that there not be one more acre of land set aside as Wilderness on the Shoshone NF.

Truly, there is already enough. In this 2.4 million acre forest, we already have 1,371,402 acres of Wilderness (a little over half). The designation of Wilderness (with that capital W) means no use of mechanical devices —this includes bicycles, pickups, ATVs, chainsaws and the list goes on. The few exceptions to this overarching regulation are uses (those in place before it became a Wilderness) that were grandfathered in. Grandfathered in - generally means legal to continue without interruption.

The Shoshone NF already has enough acres designated as Wilderness. This forest exemplifies the meaning of respecting different value systems. We ask only that the millions of acres of already designated Wilderness on the SNF be recognized as enough by the final decision makers of this forest plan revision. Multiple Use & Sustained Yield and the National Forest Management Act are about sharing resources and sharing landscapes.....not trying to incrementally overtake a landscape for one dominant use. We ask that the decision makers maintain their current position reflected in the preferred alternative of the draft EIS.....no need for more Wilderness. ★

Kathleen

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ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, February 2, 2012

Registration: 10:00am
Meeting: 10:30 ~ 3:30

Worland Community Center
1200 Culbertson, Worland, WY

No-Host Lunch - Speakers - Door Prizes



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

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You may join on line:

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

www.GuardiansoftheRange.org

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.

Guardians of the Range

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Cheatgrass continued from page 2

“We have four different sites, and after we applied bacteria, we found that in the first year, we only saw a 1-to-20 percent inhibition,” she explained. “As we go through, the bacteria started reducing the competitiveness of the cheatgrass, and the natives began to reappear.”

Through her fieldwork, Kennedy noted that by four or five years after application, cheatgrass disappears. “In some places, we can get about 100 percent control in three years,” she added. She also mentioned that the bacterium can be used in combination with herbicides for additional control efforts.

Currently, Kennedy noted that the bacteria will be a low-cost product for effective weed control, but the bacteria must survive to be effective. They must also enter the soil.

“We put the organism on in the fall or winter when temperatures are lower, and when a rain or snow is going to come. A little rain is necessary to get the bacteria off the surface of the soil and in deeper.” She also added that the bacteria must establish in the soil.

Additionally, for the bio-control method to work, native species must be able to come back and compete. “We have to manage this more than just spraying herbicide,” she commented.

Kennedy continued that currently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is working to register the product and get it approved for use through the Environmental Protection Agency, but the potential implications of a bio-control mechanism are important.

Think Monitoring!

DEADLINE: JANUARY 4, 2013 at 5:00 PM. Think Monitoring! Think permit renewal and need for current solid range data in your file to justify renewal! Rangeland Health Assessment Program (RHAP) second round Request for Proposal (RFP) for projects. The Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) Check out: <http://agriculture.wy.gov> and click on RHAP for details.



LOOKING FOR EXPERIENCED RANCH HELP?

Couple with references seeking employment. Timeline flexible. Guardian members and potential members are encouraged to contact Kathleen for details. 587-3723



“This is a really, really interesting tool to put in the toolbox,” Kennedy mentioned. “If we can find organism in the soil to do the job and inhibit specific plant species, we can have some good bio-control matches. We need to improve plant diversity and get cheatgrass out,” she continued. “We aren’t talking about silver buckshot. We need a shotgun approach, with all these things working together to get to our target, which is getting rid of cheatgrass.”

Saige Albert is the managing editor of the Wyoming Livestock Roundup and can be reached at saige@wylr.net. ★