



Guardians of the Range

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

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Photo courtesy Christy Love

Gilead Fire

The Gilead fire on the Bighorn NF, 10 miles NW of Buffalo has been burning since August 14, the result of a lightning strike. At press time, it had consumed 8,068 acres. It is burning in extremely steep, rocky and rough terrain. High and dry winds have challenged fire fighters but they have succeeded in getting it 47% contained.

Part of the Rock Creek proposed wilderness area has burned. Readers should know that if that area had been designated as Wilderness then efforts to use helicopters, vehicles and other mechanical devices would not have been legal in an area officially designated as Wilderness. The Rock Creek area was ripe for fire with significant fuel loading of dead and downed trees. More on this important in next newsletter.

The Guardians want to thank the Bighorn NF staff and firefighting crews for their ongoing handling of this serious fire. It's a long way from being put out unless we get snow or rain. The forest staff has made first class efforts at communicating and caring about the community and those individuals so immediately affected. ★

Special Note: This award is so well-deserved! Not only for the resource benefits, but as recognition of the years of 'staying with it' through many ups and downs. All participants have demonstrated that keeping the goals in focus produces results which benefit not only the natural resources, but the working relationship between the private and public sectors. Well done!

BLM Announces Winner of 2012 Rangeland Stewardship Award

The Bureau of Land Management recently announced the winner of the agency's Rangeland Stewardship Award for 2012, which went to the 16-member Kirby Creek Coordinated Resource Management Group (CRM) from Worland, Wyoming. BLM-Nevada State Director Amy Lueders presented the award on behalf of BLM Acting Director Mike Pool at the annual fall meeting of the rancher-based Public Lands Council, which met in Winnemucca, Nevada.

The Worland group was recognized for significantly improving riparian conditions, rangeland vegetation, and soil stabilization on the Kirby Creek watershed – which has in turn benefitted wildlife habitat – through the implementation of innovative land-management practices.

These BLM partners stand out among their peers in their commitment to promoting well-managed public lands that provide for a variety of resource values and uses, such as wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and livestock grazing," Lueders said.

Lueders added, "While many people are aware that livestock grazing is one of the authorized commercial uses of public lands, it's important to keep in mind that this activity can also help manage plant communities and accomplish conservation goals.

*Please see **Stewardship** on page 2*

**"Relativity applies to physics, not ethics."
~ Albert Einstein, physicist (1879-1955)**



Members of the Kirby Creek CRM accepted the 2012 Rangeland Stewardship Award at the Public Lands Council annual meeting. Pictures are Amy Leuders, BLM Nevada State Director; Jim Wilson; Brett Belden; Everett Jones; Mike Phillips, BLM Worland Office; Mike Teitmeyer, BLM formerly in Worland office now in Nevada. Photo courtesy Lois Herbst.

Stewardship continued from page 1

In short, grazing is a method for reaching desired future land conditions.”

The 16 members of the Kirby Creek group who worked in coordination with the BLM are: Kirby Creek Ranch (Everett Jones); V Ranch (Jim and Terry Wilson); Henthorne Ltd. Partnership (Tad and Vendla Henthorne); Reed Creek Ltd. Partnership (Linda Reed); Mishurda Mountain Ranches (Birg and Debbie Mishurda); Russell Ranch (Tom and Colleen Anderson); Paradise K Ranch (Pat Kelly); Chuck Bunch Redland Ranch (Mike and Lisa Kimsey); Joe and Karen Gloyd; Brett and Isabel Belden; Barry and Cindy Nye; Jim Kirsch (Project Manager); Jim Mischke (Natural Resources Conservation Service); Dawn Peil (Natural Resources Conservation Service); Amy Anderson (Wyoming Game & Fish); and Carla Thomas (Hot Springs Conservation District).

The BLM has presented its Rangeland Stewardship Award every year since 2006.

The BLM manages more land – over 245 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands. ★

Drought

**Producers and landowners
are encouraged to visit
The NRCS website**

www.nrcs.usda.gov

**or stop by their local NRCS office to find out if
they are eligible for drought assistance.**

**Learn more about WHIP and EQIP and other
NRCS programs.**



Leslie Thronburg, Student Training Enrichment Program; William Woolston, SGI Range Conservationist; Jarren Kuipers, Land Steward Services. Photo courtesy Lea Garcia.

Sage Grouse Initiative: What Is It and Who Benefits?

~ by **William Woolston**

**Sage Grouse Initiative Range Conservationist
Meeteetse Conservation District**

The Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) was created by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in response to the listing of greater sage grouse as a “candidate species” for possible listing as “threatened and endangered” under the Endangered Species Act.

The goal of all of the partners involved in the Sage Grouse Initiative is wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching. The mantra often heard at SGI training sessions: What’s good for ranching is good for sage grouse, is widely held within the group of 24 range conservationists and biologists working to administer the on-the-ground portion of the sage grouse initiative in 11 western states. We are here to work with ranchers, to make this cooperative effort successful, for both ranchers and sage grouse! This effort is built on the belief that a voluntary, cooperative approach; that benefits both wildlife, including sage grouse; and the landowner, is a more positive, beneficial approach than the implementation of regulatory burdens placed on vast amounts of western rangeland.

Livestock production in today’s economy is no different than the rest of the agriculture industry. Success is all about efficiency and cost reduction. The more that a producer can rely on native range for their forage needs, the less input costs in terms of purchased feed or hay that producer needs. Managing native rangeland through sustainable grazing management planning, such as rotational grazing plans or rest-rotation plans will help to improve forage productivity, lowering input costs and increasing the opportunity for higher net returns. Sustainable grazing management will also improve the overall health of the rangeland, allowing plants to store adequate nutrients so that they are ready for the next years growing season, ensuring a proper mix of native grass and forb species on your range.

Sustainable grazing management helps to reduce soil loss to erosion, helps to hold soil moisture by leaving adequate litter, and allows plants the needed rest to provide for root growth and energy storage so vital to a healthy rangeland.

Please see **Benefits** on page 4



by Kathleen Jachowski

Direct from the Director: Resource Projects

Getting range improvements planned for, and put into action takes much longer and requires more careful planning than in days gone by. To avoid frustra-

tion we encourage permittees to discuss range improvements ideas at least 18 months prior to when you think you would need them. This timeline applies to both USFS and BLM.

This isn't a requirement of the agencies, it is only a recommendation of the Guardians. Doing this should allow enough time to explore the needed details and determine, along with the agency, the feasibility of the project.

As you know many new projects will require an environmental assessment (EA) or perhaps an environmental impact statement (EIS). These public processes require both time and money and the agencies need to plan for those considerations. Some maintenance activities don't need the same type of handling, so it is helpful to determine that well ahead by visiting with your range con.

Follow up by you and by the agency is also a necessary and smart move. Conversation gets the ball rolling, but following up with the range staff to see how things are progressing is one of the best ways to help keep things on track and moving forward.

Members and potential members that would like help in getting a range improvement project underway are welcome to call me for assistance. That is part of your membership, a service the Guardians provide. Having this assistance can help take some of the pressure off of wondering where things stand and how to you keep things really moving along and not lingering.

So.....don't hesitate to utilize of the many benefits that comes with your membership. We're glad to help!

Kathleen

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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.

Wolf Management Turned Over to Wyoming

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) has removed the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) in Wyoming from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

The FWS published in the Federal Register Volume 77, Number 175 (Monday, September 10, 2012), pages 55529—55604 that gray wolves in Wyoming are recovered and are no longer in need of protection as part of an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

“Wyoming gray wolf population is stable, threats are sufficiently minimized, and a post-delisting monitoring and management framework has been developed. Therefore, the final rule returns management for this species to the appropriate State, Tribal, or Federal agencies (National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges).

“Finally, this action makes obsolete and removes the Yellowstone Experimental Population Area established in 1994 to facilitate reintroductions.”

The rule becomes effective on September 30, 2012.

The final rule is available at www.regulations.gov, Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2011-0039. Additional information is available at www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf. ★

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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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\$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.

You may join on line:

www.GuardiansoftheRange.org

To pay by check, please make checks payable to:

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Benefits continued from page 2

Sage Grouse benefit from sustainable grazing systems as well. Adequate residual levels offer protection from predators during the fall and nesting season for the adults and chicks. A healthy range with a diverse plant population and intact riparian areas provide crucial forbs and insects for the broods of chicks in the spring and summer.

Who benefits from the Sage Grouse Initiative? Wildlife, ranchers, and agricultural communities to name a few. Yes, there are financial benefits in taking part in the sage grouse initiative. More than 450 ranchers have enrolled in the Sage Grouse Initiative, protecting over 1.3 million acres through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). Many ranchers have placed conservation easements on their ranches, using the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), and the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), protecting their land from development pressures and ensuring that ranching will be an important part of their families heritage for the future. More importantly, sustainable grazing management will help to make western ranching more profitable on a long term basis. The overall health of our rangeland will help to keep costs down, reduce the ability of invasive species to gain a foothold, and maintain large expanses of intact range landscapes that are so important to the success of conserving greater sage grouse as well as our western way of life.

If you have sage grouse on your ranch and you would like to discuss SGI further, I would love to discuss the program with you.

I would also encourage you to check out the SGI website: www.sagegrouseinitiative.com. The site contains a wealth of information, interesting articles and videos.

William Woolston may be reached at 307-754-9301 ext. 115 or william.woolston@wy.usda.gov. William is familiar to many of our readers from his years managing the family's ranch, John E. Rice & Sons, near Sheridan. ★

Thank You BLM

At least two fires in Hot Springs County on BLM allotments were quickly suppressed in August before they got out of control.

We very much appreciate the Worland BLM's quick and decisive fire management, as well as the help of several local landowners.

Let's all think snow or rain!!