

The Corner Post

Winter/Spring 2019

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources & Policy Division
Newsletter



WY. Dept. of Agriculture
Natural Resources & Policy Division
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Quotable Quotes

"You can only milk a cow so long, then you're left holding the pail."

-Hank Aaron

GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY = GOOD NEWS

Chris Wichmann, Manager

Good News: The Wyoming Department of Agriculture has received a completed Master Agreement for Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) with the U.S. Forest Service for both Region 2 (Rocky Mountain Region) and Region 4 (Intermountain Region), covering all forests in Wyoming.

The GNA is a cooperative agreement or contract which allows the State to perform watershed and rangeland restoration and management services on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Congress passed two laws expanding GNA: the 2014

Appropriations Act and the 2014 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill permanently authorizes the GNA for both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) extending it to all 50 States and Puerto Rico. It excludes construction, reconstruction, repair, or restoration of paved or permanent roads or parking areas and construction, alteration, repair, or replacement of public buildings or works; as well as projects in wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and lands where removal of vegetation is prohibited or restricted. The 2014 Appropriations Act included a five-year authorization for the use of GNA in all states with NFS lands to perform watershed and rangeland restoration and protection services on NFS and BLM lands when similar and complementary services are performed by the state on adjacent state or private lands.

Continued on page 4



*Cover photo courtesy of Kenna Noble

HOW TO DECIDE WHEN TO REQUEST **Mediation**

Lucy Pauley, Mediation Coordinator

Maybe you've picked up some information about mediation from our booth or heard a presentation about using mediation for an agricultural conflict. Maybe you've even read an article in this newsletter and remember mediation is a process designed to help parties resolve their problem in a way that works for both of them. But today, you are in the middle of a conflict with a neighbor, or your lender has sent a letter indicating that your loan is not compliant, or you can't seem to talk with a family member about the future of the ranch without the conversation turning into a screaming match and you wonder "should I try mediation?"

Deciding to request mediation can be a difficult step for some of us to take. It can be tough to admit you can't solve the problem on your own. Mediation does not have to be a drastic step you choose when there are no other options available. It can be a natural part of the process of getting a situation resolved.

Ideally, parties should attempt mediation when they've tried to negotiate about the problem, but different communication styles or high emotions are getting in the way of a conversation. There might be a lot of anger or distrust and sitting down with the other side seems impossible, but even if attorneys are already involved, mediation can still be an option. Several of the cases the Mediation Program coordinated in 2018 involved working with parties represented by counsel and in many cases, the attorneys encouraged their clients to try the mediation process.

Mediation is also more likely to be successful when both sides want to resolve the issue and are willing to brainstorm potential solutions. The parties should be prepared to talk about their wants and needs but also be open to considering what the other side needs to get the situation resolved. ✦

If you would like to learn more about the mediation process or find out if your situation is appropriate for mediation, please contact Lucy Pauley at (307) 777-8788 or email lucy.pauley@wyo.gov.

You can also visit the website at
<http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp/mediation-program>.



Joe Budd, Senior Policy Analyst

Management of prairie dogs on the Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG) is a perennial topic and in recent years, the number of acres of prairie dogs grew to previously unseen levels until a plague event removed the vast majority of colonies. In the years following the event, multiple groups met to try to develop a path forward. Most recently, the WDA led a six month series of meetings on the topic to try to consolidate information and thoughts of various groups and users to deliver to the Forest Service so they could begin analysis on a TBNG Plan Amendment.

Highlights from the final product include general agreement on the use of buffers, adjustments to Management Area boundaries, the use of natural barriers like terrain and riparian areas, and a major shift in management emphasis away from black footed ferrets towards vegetation communities that provide for a suite of grassland species and multiple uses. While there was agreement on broad topics, fine details were

largely left out due to time constraints. The group did not work on consensus but instead was given the opportunity to write their own comments that were then attached to a larger synopsis of the six month process. We feel the Forest Service could use these letters and the details that are contained within them to develop a range of alternatives and expedite the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

In the upcoming months, the WDA will be working with the Forest Service to begin the NEPA process. An amendment to the existing TBNG Plan is expected to be targeted and quick. The Wyoming County Commissioner's Association will be taking over the meetings in 2019 as convener so the working group can continue to discuss pertinent issues and interim management on the TBNG. ✦

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To receive an electronic or printed copy of
**The Cornerpost
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please contact **Michelle MacDonald** at:
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Our newsletter is also posted on the **WDA
website** at:
[http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp.](http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp)



CRACKING THE CODE: OBTAINING NEW GRAZING PERMITS

Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst

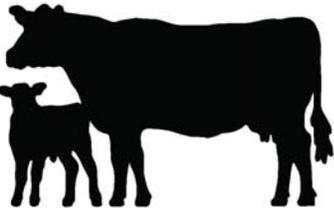
Young farmers and ranchers returning home after college are often eager to try new ways of doing business, but cracking the code can test the strongest wills of family hierarchy. As with many family ranches, the age of active operators is increasing. Some of them are looking to retire and transition the ranch, including the federal lands grazing allotments. Many of these grazing allotments have been in the same family for generations and don't come up for sale or trade often.

Despite the complexities of federal lands grazing compared to previous generations, young farmers and ranchers should consider the benefits of these permits and find ways to retain them.

- Convey your interests to immediate family members who have grazing permits
- Speak with neighboring ranches, especially those sharing borders, because these permits wouldn't require expensive trucking

- Contact range staff with the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management about vacant allotments, putting your name on the waiting list, or find out if they are aware of future changes to existing permittees
- Review the regulations for both agencies. There are existing policies and process for obtaining grazing permits, some of which are complex.
- Understand the current status, data collected, and terms and conditions of each permit.

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture Natural Resources and Policy staff is always available to help navigate the process. ✦



GOOD NEWS (continued from page 1)

So, what does this mean to Wyoming and the Department?

What this means is that we now have the capability to identify rangeland related projects that are a priority for the State and its producers. Projects that would not normally be a priority for the Forest Service can now be addressed through the GNA. Potential projects could range from Permit Renewals, Range Restoration

Projects, Range Improvement Projects, Monitoring and associated NEPA can all be completed under the GNA Master Agreement.

We are excited about this opportunity to help the Forest Service manage NFS lands while improving rangeland resources and agriculture producer's operations. We plan to be aggressive and utilize this new tool as much as possible in the coming year. ✦

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

Local Government, Collaboration, Conservation:



Conservation Districts

Justin Caudill, Ag Program Coordinator

Prior to working for the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource and Policy Division I had heard of Conservation Districts but did not have any idea what they did or who they were. I kind of knew they were created to work on local issues related to soil and water conservation, and I would see individuals running for the conservation district supervisor's position on the general ballot. But that was the extent of my understanding of these special districts.

For the past eleven years I have had the honor to work with all thirty-four Conservation Districts in Wyoming, and would like to share some basic history and information related to these districts.

Conservation of soil and water came to the forefront of our nation's conscious as an outcome of the Dust Bowl of the 1930's. During this period agencies ranging from Land Grant Universities to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration researched and implemented conservation actions, sometimes competing with each other in doing so. Because of this the President developed a model Conservation District Law, creating an avenue for local leadership to coordinate efforts to local conditions and priorities. In 1941 the Wyoming State Legislature passed an enabling act establishing conservation districts.

§11-16-103. Legislative declarations and policy.

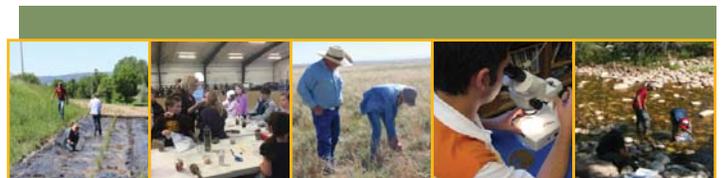
(b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil, and soil and water resources of this state, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and thereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resources, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect

public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

As noted there are 34 conservation district in Wyoming all sharing a single mission: to coordinate assistance from all available sources—public and private, local, state and federal—to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resources concerns. Districts also help to:

- Implement farm, ranch and forestland conservation practices to protect soil productivity, water quality and quantity, air quality and wildlife habitat,
- Conserve and restore wetlands, which purify water and provide habitat for birds, fish and other animals,
- Protect groundwater resources,
- Assist communities and homeowners in planting trees and other land cover to hold soil in place, clean the air, provide cover for wildlife, and beautify neighborhoods,
- Help developers control soil erosion and protect water and air quality during construction, and
- Reach out to communities and schools to teach the value of agriculture and natural resources and encourage conservation efforts.

If you would like to discover information on your local Conservation District visit the Wyoming Association of Conservation District's website at <http://conservewy.com/DISTRICTS.html>. On this page you will see a map of Wyoming, click the area of the map where you live and you will be redirected to your local Conservation District web-page. ✦





Upcoming Events

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| March 13: | Albin Farm and Home Expo, Albin | May 8-9: | JIO/PAPO Board Meeting, Pinedale |
| March 19-20: | WY Beef Council Board Meeting, Riverton | June 5-6: | WACD Spring Board of Director's Meeting |
| March 19-21: | WCDEA Winter Training, Saratoga | June 5-7: | WY Cattle Industry Summer Convention & Trade Show, Gillette |
| March 22: | Wyoming Bee College, Cheyenne | August 13-17: | Wyoming State Fair, Douglas |
| April 10-13: | Wyoming FFA State Convention and Leadership Conference, Cheyenne | | |
| April 13: | Laramie Rivers Conservation Expo, Laramie | | |
| April 16-17: | Basic Mediation Training Workshop, Lusk | | |
| April 23-24: | Basic Mediation Training Workshop, Lusk | | |



If you have questions or comments about the information in this newsletter, or to obtain an email copy, please contact Michelle MacDonald, Natural Resources & Policy Division at: 307.777.7323 or michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov.

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