

The Corner Post

Summer/Fall 2018

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

*Your Permit & Your Right To File a
Protest or Objection* 1

*GRASS-CAST: Experimental
Grassland Productivity Forecast* 2

*Rangeland Health Assessment
Program: New Funding for
2018-2019* 3

*Farm Credit Mediation Services
Available* 4

2018 Mediation Summer Intern 5

Upcoming Events 6

Quotable Quotes

"To sit on a ranch horse that's been
broken in, it's like getting in a
Porsche"
-Sam Shepard

*Cover photo courtesy of Joe Budd

YOUR PERMIT & YOUR RIGHT TO FILE A PROTEST OR OBJECTION

Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst

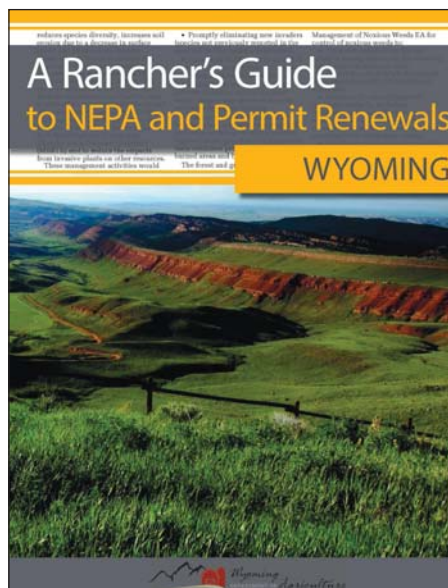
If you are a public lands livestock grazing permittee, you certainly realize not everyone supports your practices and business. Organizations with the mission to remove livestock grazing from public lands are prevalent and persistent. Their involvement ranges anywhere from collecting vegetation data at the allotment level, to appealing the agency's decision in district court. As a permittee you should evaluate

your involvement in not only the day to day livestock management activities, but also throughout the permit renewal process.

One important step agencies must include in their grazing permit renewal decisions is the Protest or Objection process. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) utilizes the Protest process, while the US Forest Service (USFS) utilizes the Objection process, both of which allow the interested public and affected permittees to review and submit final concerns prior to a draft decision.

The BLM will issue the proposed decision and allow 15 days to receive protest points. The USFS will issue a draft decision and provides a 45 day objection period. Permittees are ultimately the ones who live with the decisions and have to implement them throughout the grazing season and for the remainder of the permit.

Continued on page 4



GRASS-CAST

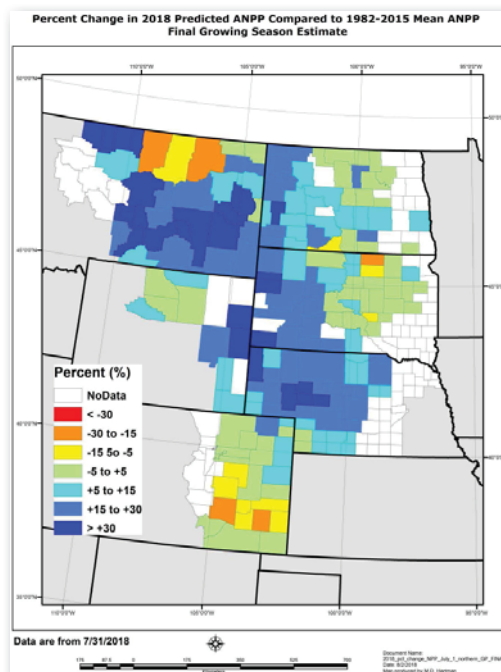
Experimental Grassland Productivity Forecast

Joe Budd, Senior Policy Analyst

The USDA's Ag Research Service (ARS), in partnership with the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC), Colorado State University and University of Arizona recently released "Grass-Cast" - an experimental grassland productivity forecast for the Great Plains including parts of Wyoming. Grass-Cast uses historical data and precipitation information to try to forecast whether we will see "above-normal, near-normal, or below-normal" amounts of forage.

Forecasts are updated every two weeks. For producers in the counties currently covered by Grass-Cast, this could prove to be a useful tool. However, producers should remember this is forecasting – not a guarantee. As we are all aware, a county-level look at precipitation may not represent what happens on an individual operation and it cannot autonomously drive management decisions. For example, Grass-Cast cannot tell you whether the forage produced will be "desirable" or "undesirable" – simply that there is likely to be more or less vegetation (hence the use of ANPP or Above-ground Net Primary Production).

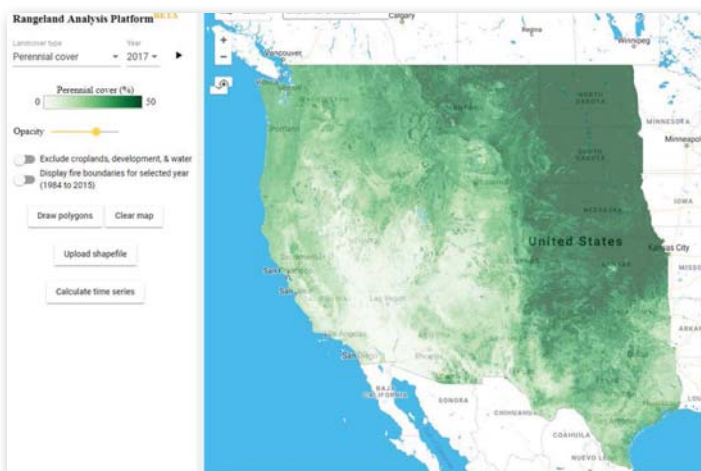
This also does not account for when you graze, how you graze, or with what type of livestock. Producers using this new tool should also note that colors used to depict expected variation from "normal" are important. The map above shows the estimated rangeland production as of July 31, 2018. This is Grass-Cast's "end date" for the year and final estimates for the summer of 2018 (compared to each county's 34 year historical data).



Counties in white are "no data" due to a lack of information or low confidence in the statistics, blue and green (all of the other counties in Wyoming) represent +/-5% (more or less "normal" production) to over 30% higher than "normal".

As with any new tool, the ways in which it can be used are up to the end user. While some uses are more obvious, others might not be realized until we begin to explore and experiment with Grass-Cast more. For example, coupling Grass-Cast with other tools like the Rangeland Analysis Platform might add value to the

information and further inform decisions. Get creative and watch for next year's Grass-Cast in early May. For more information visit: <http://grasscast.agsci.colostate.edu/>. ✦



Rangeland Analysis Platform
(<https://rangelands.app>)



Rangeland Health Assessment Program

New Funding for 2018-2019

Chris Wichmann, Manager

The Wyoming Rangeland Health Assessment Program (RHAP) is now in its seventh year of funding projects. The Legislature has again supported RHAP by providing \$200,000 for grant funding, to be spent in this biennium. Over the past seven years the Wyoming Department of Agriculture has funded approximately 56 projects covering over 4.2 million acres.

RHAP was developed to assist producers to monitor rangelands and collect valuable information so land management agencies can develop appropriate strategies to achieve or maintain rangeland health. The grant funds help develop relationships between producers and management agencies, allowing for joint cooperative monitoring, while assisting in future permitting or National Environmental Policy Act needs. Most importantly RHAP provides an avenue for producers and land management agencies to cooperatively develop a comprehensive monitoring plan.



It is crucial to the success of this program and the success of an individual project to ensure producers and land management agencies are truly cooperating in the monitoring and the development of the Monitoring Plan. The projects should focus on short-term goals (annual monitoring) and the long-term goal of continued joint cooperative monitoring well beyond the project funding. The information collected can guide future management and defend management decisions. ✦

RHAP Requests for Proposals are being accepted throughout the biennium.

If you have any questions or an interest in the program please contact the Natural Resource and Policy Division at 307-777-6576 or check out the webpage:

<http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp/rangeland-health>.

Americans with Disabilities Act

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



Lucy Pauley, Mediation Coordinator

Farmers across the country are facing financial difficulties. Low prices on crops and livestock, high interest rates, and other factors are contributing to tough situations for agricultural producers. Agricultural credit mediations are not a large part of the Mediation Program in Wyoming, but in 2017, we saw an increase in the number of requests. This summer has been a little quieter. While Wyoming producers may be in better shape than their counterparts in the Midwest, some producers may find themselves needing ag credit mediation to work through loan defaults, delinquent payments and more.

Agricultural credit mediation takes place between the borrower and the lender. The mediator helps both sides talk about the situation and figure out if there are any options to resolve the problem. In some cases, the terms of the loan might be changed. Borrowers may have to sell off equipment or other assets to pay towards the loan. The lender may be willing to extend

terms or take additional collateral. Working together, both parties may find a solution that prevents loan acceleration or foreclosure and meets the needs of all sides.

Ag credit mediations are not just limited to banks and traditional lenders. Feed stores and co-ops, implement dealers and other business working with ag-related clientele can offer mediation to customers with past-due payments. All of the ag credit mediations in Wyoming are conducted at no charge to the borrower or the lender, through funding provided by the USDA and the State of Wyoming.

Whether you are a borrower in a tight spot or a lender needing assistance in having a tough conversation, the Mediation Program may be a resource that can help. If you'd like more information, visit our website at <http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp/mediation-program> or call us at (307) 777-8788. ✦

PERMIT (continued from page 1)

If the agency's decision conflicts with the permittees' ability to manage their livestock, has potential for future negative impacts, or unexpected consequences, the permittees should file a protest or objection.

Some permittees may seek legal counsel or feel comfortable filing the protest or objection themselves. There are a couple of benefits to filing; first you have one additional opportunity to reiterate or address your concerns, and second is to equitably engage in conversations with agency staff and possibly organizations who oppose the reissuance of your grazing permit.

It's important to keep open lines of communication with the agency before the draft and final decisions are issued to eliminate being blindsided, to know what your legal rights are, to identify what timelines are in place, and to know what happens if your permit is protested, objected, or appealed. For more information about grazing permit renewal process, including filing a protest or objection, you can call the Natural Resources and Policy Division and/or download "A Rancher's Guide to NEPA and Permit Renewals" on the Wyoming Department of Agriculture website: <http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp> ✦

2018 MEDIATION SUMMER INTERN



Terisa Oomens, Mediation Intern

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with a major in Reclamation, Environment, and Conservation; and three minors in Environmental Science, Sustainable and Renewable Energy Sources, and Social and Environmental Justice. I grew up on a hobby farm in Wisconsin raising beef cattle, spent a summer during college working on a berry farm, and most of my undergraduate classes included students with agricultural backgrounds. Agriculture and the environment have always been a strong interest of mine and attending the University of Wyoming Law has given me the opportunity to expand on my interests through the law.

I spent my high school and undergraduate career learning about issues and solutions of rural Wisconsin. This internship gave me the opportunity to learn about issues and solutions of rural Wyoming. Although they are both agriculturally based, it became obvious early on that the issues are very different.

I had the opportunity to attend the Wyoming Cattle Industry Summer Convention & Trade Show where I met ranchers and agency employees while hearing current issues and possible solutions facing Wyoming ranchers. I was also able to travel to several Forest Service and Farm Service Agency offices across the state to talk about how their year is going and how the mediation program can help with problems that may arise. I was also able to conduct a large amount of research throughout the summer on topics ranging from wild horses to mediation confidentiality. At the end of the summer I led a webinar on mediation confidentiality based on my case research. I have really enjoyed my time at the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. In the fall, I will be taking my expanded knowledge back to the University of Wyoming Law for my second year of law school. ✦

NATURAL RESOURCES & POLICY DIVISION STAFF

Chris Wichmann, Manager..... (307) 777-6576
Justin Williams, Sr Policy Analyst.....777-7067
Joe Budd, Sr Policy Analyst.....777-7024
Lucy Pauley, Mediation Coordinator.....777-8788
Michelle MacDonald, Administrative Specialist777-7323
Justin Caudill, Ag Program Coordinator.....350-5480



To receive an electronic or printed copy of The Cornerpost Newsletter

please contact Michelle MacDonald at:
(307) 777-7323 or
michelle.macdonald@wyo.gov.

Our newsletter is also posted on the WDA
website at:
<http://agriculture.wy.gov/divisions/nrp>.





Upcoming Events

October 11:	Improve Training for Mediators, Cheyenne	December 3-5:	WY Stock Growers Winter Round-up, Casper
November 6-7:	Mediation Workshop, Cheyenne	January 8:	Legislative General Session Convenes
November 7-9:	WY Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Sheridan	February 2-6:	National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, San Antonio
November 8-11:	West Central States Wool Growers Convention, Casper		
November 13-14:	Mediation Workshop, Cheyenne		
November 14-16:	WY Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention, Evanston		
November 15-16	WY Women in Ag Symposium, Casper		



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.

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

The Corner Post