



Office News — March 2009

*Bureau of Land Management * Wyoming Department of Agriculture *
Wyoming Game & Fish * Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality*

JIO Welcomes Jim Lucas, BLM Project Coordinator

Jim Lucas graduated with honors from Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas, with a Bachelors Degree in Forestry majoring in wildlife management. He started his career with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1975 and worked in the Roseburg and Eugene District Offices in western Oregon specializing in silviculture and reclamation of harvested forest lands. In 1981, Jim went back to Texas to become Manager of Land Rights for the Trinity River Authority of Texas, a quasi-governmental agency of the State of Texas. As Land Rights Manager, Jim led a high profile land acquisition program bringing private landowners and various governmental agencies together to construct and maintain numerous regional water supply, wastewater collection/treatment, and recreation projects. In 2003, Jim returned to the BLM to work in the Lands & Minerals Division of the Pinedale Field Office as a Realty Specialist and Natural Resource Specialist. Jim joined the JIO in January 2009 as its Project Coordinator. Jim holds the SR/WA Senior Designation with the International Right Of Way Association and is recertified through 2011. Jim and his wife, Joanne, have 3 children and 1 grandchild, and are avid fishermen for everything from Texas bass to Wyoming trout. For the past 6 years, Jim and Joanne have also enjoyed their horses and the Great Outdoors here in Sublette County, Wyoming.

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Strategic Plan Posted

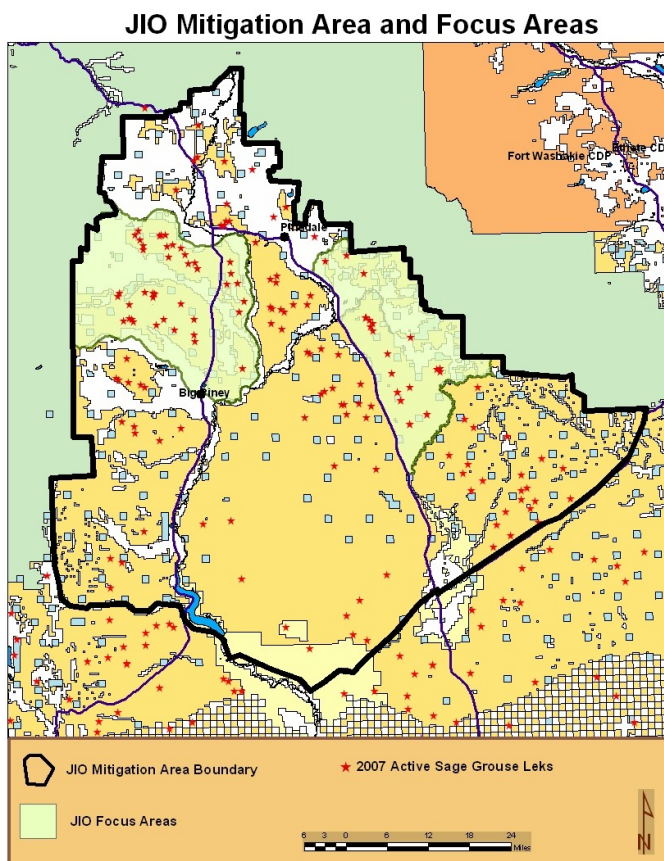
Submitted by Lisa Reinhart

The JIO provides land management recommendations in support of the adaptive management process, as outlined in the Jonah Infill Drilling Project Area (JIDPA) Record Of Decision (ROD). JIO selects and manages off-site mitigation projects and provides the funding necessary to mitigate impacts to various resources in the JIDPA. JIO executes plans, monitoring, and other activities to ensure the effectiveness of on-site monitoring and off-site mitigation are in accordance with the Record of Decision for the Jonah Infill Drilling Project.

The adaptive management process is used to maximize the effectiveness of monitoring and mitigation efforts. An essential component of this process consists of monitoring and evaluation of actions which then leads to land management recommendations.

Resources viable for off-site mitigation identified in the ROD include: wildlife, air quality, cultural/paleontological, livestock grazing, and recreation. The JIO prioritized areas for potential wildlife mitigation within the Upper Green River Basin. These “Focus Areas” are areas which lend themselves toward maximizing habitats and species’ benefits. Projects within the Focus Areas are preferred, but not required for consideration. However, all wildlife mitigation projects must be within the mitigation boundary as identified in the figure to the right.

The Strategic Plan defines how JIO meets the aforementioned obligations and provides a framework for implementation of the adaptive management process to minimize unforeseen impacts and maximize the benefits of off-site compensatory mitigation. This document is reviewed and modified throughout the year during strategic planning efforts of the JIO.



View the Strategic Plan by visiting our website at:
http://www.wy.blm.gov/jonah_office/docs/StrategicPlan.pdf

Wildlife Funding and Monitoring Strategy

Submitted by Lisa Reinhart

16.5 Million dollars are dedicated towards wildlife mitigation. As of December 2008, JIO committed \$13,474,530 out of the \$16,500,000. A majority of those funds include the purchase of conservation easements tied to conservation planning on associated BLM grazing allotments as well as private land. Therefore, \$3,025,469 remains for additional wildlife mitigation projects. JIO plans to use the remaining funds for enhancing the areas that are now under conservation easements/plans and to design a monitoring plan that will validate the effectiveness of projects implemented. This plan DOES NOT exclude other opportunities that may be a good use of these funds.

A baseline vegetation inventory has been or will be conducted on all the grazing allotments and private land that are associated with funded projects. Baseline vegetation data will not be collected without the partnership and cooperation of all involved. This includes the grazing permittee(s), the BLM, or other interested parties. In these areas, the livestock producers/ landowners and the JIO have an agreement to do what is reasonably possible for range and wildlife habitat improvement. It has been challenging to warrant any kind of treatments to enhance habitat without having vegetation data and a record of available resources needed for management (fence lines, watering facilities, springs, etc.). Some data will be available in the winter of 2008-09 and the remainder for current projects will be available in 2009-10. As new projects emerge, this timeline may be extended.

In some cases, the local NRCS office is involved and has collected a resource inventory (similar to the JIO baseline data collection) and works with the landowner to develop conservation plans. These conservation plans can then be presented to JIO for approval or for more negotiation with the landowner to strengthen components for wildlife habitat improvements. For instances when the data from the JIO collection effort is used, the JIO, BLM Mitigation team, and other interested parties, in coordination with the project applicant (usually livestock producer) will analyze the data and develop projects to enhance the areas. Projects may include various treatments to the landscape to enhance habitat and range conditions. Detailed strategies to be used are outlined in the “Wildlife Mitigation Goals Strategies” section 1.1 of the JIO Strategic Plan. The BLM mitigation team will assist in development of the project and will oversee NEPA analysis.

In coordination with JIO and the BLM Mitigation Team, a draft monitoring plan will be developed by the Spring of 2009. This monitoring information will be used to determine the effectiveness of JIO wildlife mitigation overall. Monitoring for JIO mitigation may continue past the sunset of the JIO and funds will be reserved for those efforts.

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http://www.wy.blm.gov/jonah_office/docs/StrategicPlan.pdf



Weed Management Plans in Effect

Submitted by Deej Brown

In April 2008 meetings were held with Oil and Gas operators from the Jonah Field to discuss the implementation of a Weed Management Plan per the Jonah ROD for each Operator. An outline was provided and the due date for the plans was set for August 1, 2008.

All Jonah Operators were in compliance by August 1, 2008 by the submission of a quality weed management plan for control of noxious weeds in the Jonah. The plans included treatment plans for control of other invasive species such as Halogeton, and Russian thistle. Cheatgrass control was included as a direct treatment for all plans, which included notification to the JIO/BLM when it was found on any pad or ROW.

All weed management plans are required to cover six management items including: prevention and detection (education), inventory and mapping, reporting, weed control, long term monitoring/ retreatment and treatment/ control of weed spread from pads, access roads and ROW to undisturbed BLM lands.

Many management procedures that were written in these plans were practiced in 2008, although the plans will be in full affect for 2009. Full mapping of noxious weeds will be required at this time. The new JIO data base will be a tool the Operators will use to input this information for tracking by the JIO/ BLM.

On January 21, 2009 a Weed Management Educational Seminar was held at the BLM to enhance the operators management of noxious weeds. The all day seminar covered herbicide label reading, required documents, weed ID, administrative concerns (BLM) and how chemicals work. Weed Documents are due yearly to the BLM on February 1. Pesticide Use Proposals (PUP) are good for three years in most cases, and a daily application report will be due on a bimonthly basis for all chemical control treatments.



Deej Brown and Cara Farr with Black Henbane

Operation Wildlife Escape Ramp

By Theresa Gulbrandson and Cara Farr

This summer the BLM Pinedale Field Office will be on a mission to save small animals from drowning. Many different wildlife species including birds, bats, and small mammals depend on livestock troughs and tanks for water. However many of these animals die while trying to drink or bathe in these structures, especially when water levels are low and escape ramps are absent or inadequate. While mortality rates cannot be readily estimated, anecdotal evidence suggests that wildlife drownings are frequent and widespread throughout the arid west.

Historically, most livestock tanks were not designed or installed with wildlife in mind and they seldom include an adequate means of escape for animals that fall in while trying to drink or bathe. Some of the most common attempts at providing escape structures tragically have failed. Floating boards or logs, ramps that angle down from the rim toward the center of the tank without vertical sides, and piling rocks to the surface are all examples of unreliable wildlife escape structures.

The good news is that effective wildlife escape ramps are inexpensive to build and install and can virtually eliminate wildlife mortality in troughs and tanks. In order to increase wildlife safety and accessibility at these artificial watering sites without diminishing their usefulness to livestock, the JIO has funded a project to outfit all of the stock water tanks on public lands in the field office boundary with life saving wildlife escape ramps.

In order to fulfill this goal, over 550 escape ramps need to be fabricated and installed in troughs and tanks throughout the BLM Pinedale Field Office. The escape ramps are designed to touch the side and bottom of the tank so a struggling animal swimming along the perimeter of the tank will blindly find the ramp at all water levels. These structures made of expanded metal and covered with non-toxic rust proof paint are being constructed by the Pinedale High School Future Farmers of America (FFA).



Installation will take place during the spring, summer, and fall of this year and will be completed by FFA students and other volunteers. Installation will involve travelling to the stock tank, drilling a hole in the tank, and attaching the ramp with nuts and bolts. Currently partners working on the installation of the ramps are FFA, the Green River Valley Land Trust (GRVLT), and 4H. On September 9, 2009, the GRVLT will host a volunteer field day to install ramps. More volunteers and groups are welcome to join the ramp installation effort throughout the field season.

For more information call BLM mitigation team member Cara Farr at 367-5339. Private landowners interested in free bird ramps for their stock water tanks should call the Sublette County Conservation District at 367-2257 ex 110.

What Can I Do???

Submitted by Jennifer Frazier, WDEQ

I know that I contribute to pollution. I use electricity derived from our coal-fired power plants. I drive an SUV that gets nineteen miles per gallon. I consume milk and soft drinks that are packaged in plastics. Yes, I do all those things and I even have a job because of our natural gas fields!

I then take it one step further - I ask myself, "What Can I Do?". The answer - I can ACT and decide to make more environmentally-responsible decisions.

I can use *less* electricity by turning off the lights, I can maintain my vehicle appropriately, I can recycle those plastics...

I am certainly not the "model green environmentalist", but I am trying to do my part for the future.

Over the next few months, I would like to encourage you to do your part. I would like for you to ask yourself, "What Can I Do?" to make better decisions for our environment.

Each week, think of an idea where you can make your contribution to the present and future...your actions CAN have a large, positive impact!!!

Some ideas include:

- Recycle - check out the services provided by the Sublette County Recycling Center;
- Reduce idling time in your vehicle (turn it off when going into the grocery store and restaurant);
- Drink water from a re-usable cup instead of bottled water;
- Slow down while driving so there won't be so much dust in the air;
- Get a tune-up on your car;
- Turn off the lights;
- Print what you must;
- Sign up for on-line bill pay;
- Others...

Again, I encourage you to participate and make a difference...or you could always decide to be like this guy...



"To waste, to destroy, our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them."

- Theodore Roosevelt



What is the Jonah Interagency Office?

The Jonah Natural Gas Field is an area of west central Wyoming, south of the town of Pinedale in the Upper Green River Basin, and has one of the richest concentrations of natural gas in the United States. Several unique approaches were instituted in the Jonah Infill Development Project Record of Decision (ROD), to include funding by EnCana Oil and Gas (USA), Inc. and BP America Production to a \$24.5 million fund. This fund established the Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office (JIO) to provide overall management of on-site field monitoring and off-site mitigation activities.

The JIO is staffed with a person from each of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of the Interior/Bureau of Land Management.

The Pinedale BLM provides support to the JIO with a mitigation team for project implementation. This staff consists of a Wildlife Biologist, Rangeland Management Specialist, Planner, Archeologist, and Reclamation Specialist.

Contact us for more information at:

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