

**Wyoming Public Lands Initiative
Gardner Mountain / North Fork
Harold Jarrard Park, Kaycee
November 22, 2016**

MINUTES

Present: Commissioner Bill Novotny, Commissioner Linda Greenough, Brock Hanson, Dave Stoetzel, Rob Davidson, Nolan Davis, Chris Brock, JD Petty

BLM Representatives-Chris Durham, Charlotte Darling, Ardy Hahn, Bill Ostheimer

Public – Nathan Williams, Bob McDowell

We spoke with NRCS to come and share their perspective on the ecology of the two WSA. They declined because they felt they were not qualified.

Archeology and Ecology of the Two WSA

Ardy Hahn, Archeologist, BLM

Ms. Hahn gave an overview of the archeological resources in the area. The first evidence of people living in this area appears about 12,000 years ago during the Paleo-Indian period. In the southern Big Horns archeologists have discovered that most of the stratified burial sites date to the later Paleo-Indian period, 8,000 to 10,000 years ago.

The hypothesis that the archeologists have of this culture is that a separate group of people lived in the mountain foothills and are not the same as the group traveling the plains. Roughly 8,000 years ago the climate started to get warmer and drier. The Pleistocene Megafauna like the Mammoths, Mastodons, and Bison Antiquus started to die off and that caused people to change culturally. Archeologists say that is the end of the Paleo-Indian period and the start of the Archaic Period. The Archaic Period started about 8,000 years ago and lasted to about 1500 years ago. There is the early, middle and the late archaic periods. There is evidence of people living in the Big Horn Mountains during all three archaic periods. One culture that we see an abundance of in this area is the Late Plains Archaic group that specialized in pedestrian bison hunting. They include at least three distinct groups, the Pelican Lake, the Besant and the Yonkee. About 1,500 years ago the bow and arrow caused a major shift in how people lived and hunted. Archeologists called this the Late Prehistoric period. European trade goods started showing up during what the archeologists call the Protohistoric period. This period is also when horses started appearing. The Historic period started when the fur traders and the immigrants started moving through Wyoming about 200 years ago. It continued on up through the homesteading era.

Important historic sites in the area include the Dull Knife Battle Site and several early homesteads. In the southern Big Horns we have 263 archeological sites recorded and assigned

a Smithsonian number on BLM surface. These include sites recorded within Gardner Mountain and North Fork Wilderness Study Areas. Those sites cover all the periods that have been mentioned. Those include rock art, open camps, rock shelters and cairns, teepee circle sites, burials, historic military sites and historic homesteads.

The Buffalo Field Office started using the new Resource Management Plan, RMP, in the fall of 2015. This RMP directs BLM to develop three Cultural Resource Project Plans that will outline how BLM manages archeological and historical sites on BLM surface in the southern Big Horn Mountains, Pumpkin Butte's area, and Indian war related sites. The plan also includes information about public interpretation, tourism, future research, site protection and restoration, and BLM's responsibilities to protect these non-renewable resources. The CRPPs are tiered to the land use plan, which in our case is the RMP. This gives BLM a framework of priorities for cultural resources in a specific location like the southern Big Horns. By calling out a specific site that is important and identifying what kind of protection and management that site needs, we can point to that document as support for budget request or work requests.

Projects on which BLM Cultural staff work are under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The main range improvement projects are fences and pipelines, a gravel pit on Hazelton Road, rights of way for access roads, timber sales and controlled burns. For actual site management that happens on BLM surface a program is used called Passport in Time, PIT. This is a volunteer archeology and historic preservation program that was initiated by the Forest Service in 1989. It is used to accomplish site monitoring and working on updating information on previous known sites in the southern Big Horns. The PIT program puts people who are interested in volunteering together with professional archeologists who work on surveying for new sites, evaluating sites and restoration. This program became available for federal agencies in 2004. The PIT clearing house is funded through a partnership agreement with the SRA Sphinx Foundation. Whenever Ms. Hahn does a PIT project BLM pays a project fee of \$1,250. Over the past 7 years BLM has completed 4 of these projects in the southern Big Horns. The 4 PIT projects involved 884 hours of volunteer labor with \$16,400 in in-kind labor. The information that the PIT volunteers and the archeologists have collected is used to identify, evaluate and document historic properties. They are trying to monitor known archeological sites. Many sites in the southern Big Horns were recorded in the 1960's and 1970's. The locations may not be right, photos may not be available and information may be out of date. The PIT volunteers along with Ms. Hahn take photos and records the locational data using a Tremble GPS which gives centimeter accuracy. They determine if the site is eligible or not eligible for the national register. The way the data is recorded has changed over time. Site forms from the 60's and 70's were usually a page long with brief descriptions, a hand drawn map without any scale, and without photos. Today photos of rock art and tepee ring are taken by using a method called photogrammetry. A regular camera is used and photos are overlapped. The state office in Cheyenne takes the photos and data and runs them through a program that produces 3D images. When the 3D images are created this information goes to the University of Wyoming in the Cultural Records Office. This information is available to anyone that wants to study the sites.

Most of the sites in Gardner Mountain and North Fork WSA are too remote for people to visit. They are hard to access publicly and are protected. This prohibits the areas from being researched by teachers and students.

Resources on the whole are non-renewable and the collaborative needs to keep that in mind as they move through the WSA. Information on the archeological sites can be found at the WY Cultural Records Office in Laramie. You need to be a professional archeologist or have a specific reason to access information, because the site location is protected information. If you have a reason you can call the office and they will compile information for you.

Ecology and Plants within the WSAs

Charlotte Darling, Range Specialist, BLM

Ms. Darling gave a brief overview of the botany in the Gardner Mountain and North Fork Wilderness Study Areas. She went over the general vegetative communities and some of the surveys that have taken place in the WSA's. There are 3 different types of ecosystems within Gardner Mountain and North Fork. The uplands, canyons, and the canyon bottoms are shared by both WSAs. The vegetation in the ecosystem varies a lot with topographic positions. There are three main upland vegetative communities in the forested area. The BLM conducted surveys in the Gardner Mountain WSA in 2013. They found there are more than 70 plant species. The staff was trained to identify sensitive plants. An assessment for health and disease was done on the Limber Pine as was a general assessment of the forest in the WSA. They did some coring on the mountain to see the age of the trees on the east side. The oldest trees ranged from 325 to 465 years old. An inventory was completed in the North Fork WSA last year. The botanical survey in the North Fork WSA area was more robust with 279 plant species found.

In Gardner Mountain the BLM listed two sensitive species the Limber Pine and the Williams Wafer- Parsnips. The Forest Service listed Woolly Twin Pod. North Fork has the same species as Gardner Mountain plus Howards Forget-me-not, Hairy Tranquil Golden Weed and Hapeman's Sullivantia. The Limber Pine is a slow growing pine and can live around 2,000 years. The Limber Pine in the Gardner Mountain WSA is under threat from the white pine blister rust which is a fungal disease. The BLM has collected seeds from the sturdier trees without the disease so they can be used in research. The disease usually doesn't start until the trees are at least 20 years old. The William's Wafer-Parsnips is found in Gardner Mountain and North Fork WSA. It is a low growing perennial with leathery leaves and grows in elevations of 6,000 to 8,300 feet. The wafer-parsnip is found only in Wyoming and only in the Big Horn Mountains. The population in the North Fork WSA is one of the most extensive that has ever been documented. The Woolly Twin-Pod in both Gardner Mountain and North Fork is low growing on limestone and rock outcrops at elevations from 3,300 to 10,000 feet in Wyoming and certain areas of Montana. The Howards Forget-me-not only grows in Wyoming and Montana. It can be found in the Shoshone and Big Horn National Forest and in the North Fork WSA. Hairy Tranquil Golden Weed grows in the meadows at 7,300 to 9,700 feet and is only found in the Big Horn Mountains. There is a large population in the North Fork WSA. The Hapeman's Sullivantia

grows from 2 to 20 inches tall and grows in specific micro habitats in outlying limestone springs and streams at elevations 4,600 to 8,200 feet. The population in the North Fork WSA is large.

There were 53 different insects that were found in Gardner Mountain WSA. The North Fork WSA is still being processed.

Mr. Novotny asked the collaborators, after they have heard the presentations over the last couple of meetings, if they needed a facilitator to help them work through the process. The group stated that they would like to keep the Commissioner's as the facilitators. The deadline to forward information to the congressional delegation to be included in the public lands bill is in the spring of 2017. A field trip will be put together for those who would like to take part. Gregory Cowan, Staff Attorney for Natural Resource Policy, WCCA, would be willing to come and talk about how the WPLI-Gardner Mountain/North Fork fits in with the state and how collaborators work.

Mr. Novotny stated that he wants to make sure that the group has the best tools to help in their decisions. The group would like to have someone explain and answer questions of all the various designations. The BLM stated that they could bring some people from their office to help answer those questions. Mr. Novotny said he would like to have someone come in from the firefighting community to talk about what the different designations do in the event there was a catastrophic wildfire in the WSA and what that would mean to management options.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 10, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Buffalo BLM Office.

Respectfully submitted by,

Sheila Newcomb

A recording of the meeting is available.