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# Bridger-Teton National Forest



## 2006

# Forest Highlights

United States Department of Agriculture      Forest Service      Intermountain Region  
Bridger-Teton National Forest      [www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf)      307-739-5500      2006

## Meeting the Challenge

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

At over 3.4 million acres, the Bridger-Teton National Forest is one of the largest National Forest in the United States outside Alaska. The forest is noted for its spectacular scenery and natural features, large and diverse wildlife populations, and recreation opportunities.

With an increased demand for services and facilities, our task of managing public land has never been more challenging. Our efforts must concentrate on what is most important—the long term care and management of the treasured lands and resources. In spite of these challenges we have been able to accomplish much and this report is my effort to share some of them with you.

I invite you to continue to share comments and suggestions on our land stewardship and public service. I encourage you to continue your volunteer support, education, and responsible forest use. Most of all, I urge you to enjoy this truly special place, the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

*-Carole "Kniffy" Hamilton  
Forest Supervisor*



*Wildland fire*



*Paddling on Slide Lake*



*Bighorn Sheep*

## Forest Implements New Mapping Project

A mid-level existing vegetation map (1:100,000) and other products were prepared for the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) to support the Forest Plan Revision effort and other needs. Over 3.4 million acres were mapped through a partnership between the Remote Sensing Applications Center (RSAC) and the BTNF, with assistance from the Intermountain Regional Office (RO). RSAC provided general project management and expert vegetation mapping support, BTNF field crews collected training and accuracy assessment data, and the RO provided support for designing a field-based classification system and field keys, cross-walking existing vegetation information, and developing descriptions for the map units. Vegetation map types were characterized by map unit (dominant land cover), tree and shrub canopy closure class, and tree size class. "This was a monumental effort that will be vital to the Forest as we look at watershed assessments and recreational activity management," said Forest Supervisor Kniffy Hamilton. Vegetation map types were designed to meet a minimum polygon size of 5 acres. All map products were designed according to the Forest Service standards in order to be stored in the Forest GIS databases.



## Blackrock Develops Biomass Compost Site

Five acres at the Blackrock Ranger District were developed through a Special Use Permit with Teton Conservation District to produce commercial compost. It will process forest slash from fuel reduction projects with horse manure from outfitter and guide permittees. The compost will be used to improve reclamation areas along the Togwotee Pass Highway reconstruction project. This is the first special use permit for biomass purposes in the Intermountain Region. The Forest worked with the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming Department of Transportation and the Teton Conservation District to plan and develop this site.

## Investing in Effective and Efficient Operations

The Forest continues to manage our budget to have more dollars for project implementation including.

Permanent salaries currently account for 55% of the Forest budget. A workforce planning team is working to reduce this percentage where practical.

A Fleet Assessment was completed in 2006. Fleet costs are less than 5% of the total budget. We have added one bio-diesel vehicle to the fleet, setting the example for use of fuel efficient vehicles.

Consolidating office space in the Jackson area has generated an annual savings of \$30,000.

## Pinedale 1st Grader Takes Honors

The Honorable Mention Winner of the 2006 Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl National Poster Contest was Cassidy Mitchelson from Pinedale, WY. Each year the Forest Service in conjunction with National Garden Clubs around the United States sponsor the contest. Students in grades first through fifth grade are encouraged to participate, submitting original drawings of Smokey or Woodsy and their corresponding messages. The theme for 2006 was "Help Stop the Invaders" which focused on Invasive Species in our communities.



## Wildlife Habitat Improves

Over the last year, working with our interagency partners on the Jackson Interagency Task Force, the Jackson Ranger District has nearly completed planning for the **Lower Gros Ventre Habitat Enhancement Project**. This paves the way for nearly **17,000 acres** of prescribed burning treatments for big game in the Gros Ventre corridor over the next several years. **5,600 acres** are planned for treatment in 2007. Emphasis is on improving winter and transitional ranges primarily for bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, and moose while regenerating aspen and reducing dependence on feedgrounds.

Interagency collaborators include Wyoming Game & Fish, Grand Teton National Park, and the National Elk Refuge. Financial partners include the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (\$18K), Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition (\$18,200), and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (\$13K). The Jackson District has garnered almost **\$100K** in support from partners for the Lower Gros Ventre Habitat Enhancement Project.

A large project such as this is only possible due to the seamless interdisciplinary efforts between the District's fire, range/ecology, wildlife, and line officer support, as well as excellent cooperation and dedication from out interagency partners.

# North Zone Off-Highway Vehicle Project Continuing

In November 2005, the Forest Service issued a national rule requiring all wheeled motorized travel to occur on designated routes. Called the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Rule, it prohibits cross-country motorized travel and requires local public involvement to determine what the designated motorized system will look like. The end product will be a motor vehicle use map that is free to the public and updated annually.



David Wilkinson, GIS specialist and public outreach coordinator was hired in 2006 to help with the North Zone OHV project

In 2006, the Bridger-Teton National Forest began the process to develop a designated road and motorized trail system for those areas that currently allow cross-country travel. This includes places such as Togwotee Pass, Gros Ventre Corridor, Shadow Mountain, Phillips Ridge, Munger Mountain, Mosquito Creek, and Hogback Basin. The purpose of the project is to improve management of motorized use in order to reduce resource impacts, meet public needs, and improve the ability to maintain routes and enforce travel restrictions. Wyoming State Trails program is assisting in this effort by providing the matching funds that allowed the Forest to hire a GIS specialist/public outreach coordinator essential to move this project forward.

In May 2006, a series of workshops were held in southwest Wyoming to hear from citizens about how they use these areas that currently do not have a designated motorized system, what their specific concerns were, what were desirable attributes of a designated motorized system, and ideas for balancing conflicting public use and resource values. This input was combined with resource information and current Forest Plan direction to develop an initial proposal. This proposal was then reviewed by the public in September and October via open houses and via the Forest Service website.

The revised proposal is now out for public comment to identify issues and begin the environmental analysis. The Forest expects to release a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2007.



## Recreation Enhancement Funds - Field Presence & Facilities Repaired

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) gave the Forest Service authority to retain recreation fees in order to repair, improve, operate, and maintain recreation sites and areas to quality standards and to enhance the delivery of recreation services. On the Bridger-Teton National Forest, no new recreation fees have been implemented but the new authority has allowed the Forest to provide recreation services that simply would not have been possible without this Act. This is because the Act allows the Forest to retain fees outfitter and guides pay to conduct business on the Forest. Prior to the Act, these fees went back to the federal general treasury. Now these fees are retained locally to be re-invested to enhance recreation in accordance with strict guidelines for how the funds can be expended.

REA requires that retained outfitter-guide fees be used for facility repair and maintenance, visitor services, habitat restoration, and special use permit administration. On the Jackson District this has meant investing REA funds to **improve the land and river conditions** on which outfitters and the public depend. We have committed ourselves to a program that each year will invest roughly 80% of retained fees into ensuring a visible Forest Service presence on the ground for visitor education, enforcement, and project work; 13% into larger facility improvements, and 7% into the tools and equipment necessary to support field personnel. We are also committed to leveraging funds through grants and other partner opportunities to increase results on the ground.

In 2006, REA funds were used to dramatically increase field presence to provide visitor education, regulation enforcement, visitor and resource monitoring. The field presence included 280 days of winter patrol coverage in the Cache and

Continued on back page . . .

## Forest Welcomes New Deputy Forest Supervisor Mike Balboni

The Bridger-Teton National Forest welcomed Michael Balboni to the Forest in November, 2006.

Balboni replaced Brent Larson, who took a job in Ogden, Utah in September, 2006. Most recently, Mike was a



Mike was a

District Ranger on Deputy Forest Supervisor Mike Balboni the Three Rivers Ranger district of the Kootenai National Forest for the past 12 years. He has also worked for the Forest Service in the areas of Wildlife and Forest Resources. "I was most attracted to the Bridger-Teton by the diversity of resources it has to offer," Balboni stated. He comes with 27-years experience with the Forest Service. "We are really looking forward to taking advantage of all of the Mike brings with him to the B-T," said Forest Supervisor Kniffy Hamilton.



## Forest Facts— Fiscal Year 2006

Number of facilities maintained to standard	272
Forestlands treated to achieve healthier conditions (acres)	526
Number of grazing allotments with signed decision notices	21
Miles of trail maintained to standard	400
Miles of high clearance road maintained	48
Miles of passenger car road maintained	542
Acres non-wildland/urban interface (non-WUI) high-priority hazardous fuels treated	1434
Acres wildland/urban interface (WUI) high-priority hazardous fuels treated	3717
Acres managed for noxious weeds and invasive plants	2160.5
Acres of inland lake habitat enhanced	17
Miles of inland stream habitat enhanced	4
Acres of non-threatened/endangered terrestrial habitat enhanced	3435

### ABOUT US

Of the **3.4 million acres** of the Bridger-Teton National Forest, about 1.3 million acres are within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Forest has some of the best large **backcountry areas** remaining in the national forest system, and helps round out the range of recreation settings offered to the public.

The Bridger-Teton Forest is known for its abundant and varied **wildlife**. A full complement of wildlife species that existed before settlement can still be found in the forest.

The Forest also has a variety of **vegetation zones and habitats**, including healthy riparian systems, wildflower parks, shrublands, forests, and alpine tundra. Four Research Natural Areas provide places to see and conduct research in representative habitats.

The Forest includes three alpine ski areas and eight other resorts, mostly along front of the Wind River Range and in the Buffalo Valley. With **300 outfitter-guide permits** on the forest, the Bridger-Teton has by far the most in the region. Uses include fall hunting, summer pack trips, climbing, river floating and fishing, mountain biking, llama trips, and winter sports.

There are fifty campgrounds forest-wide, and over 2600 miles of summer trails, including 175 miles of the **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail** and the 75-mile Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail. About 800 miles of winter trails give access to the forest for skiing and snowmobiling.

Over 1600 miles of road gives access to resource management and public travel. Popular recreation routes include the Snake River Canyon Highway and the Wyoming Centennial Scenic Byway.

Learn more about the Bridger-Teton by visiting us on the web at [www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf)

#### *REA Continued . . .*

Game Creek, Gros Ventre, and Granite Creek drainages to provide visitor information and enforcement to protect wintering wildlife and promote shared trail use. Funds also significantly increased field presence in the Gros Ventre Wilderness and Willow Creek backcountry. Much of the visitor use on the Jackson District occurs during the fall hunting season and REA funds enabled patrol coverage to assist visitors and enforce regulations. Funds also contributed to greater field presence in roadside camping areas such as the Gros Ventre, Shadow Mountain, Mosquito Creek, Curtis Canyon, and in the heavily used Snake River Canyon. In the Wilderness, backcountry, and roadside camping areas, field personnel provided visitor education and enforcement about proper food storage in bear country, camp stay limits, fire prevention, motorized travel restrictions, low impact camping, and group permit requirements for floating the Snake River. Funds also supported a challenge cost share agreement with the University of Wyoming to conduct baseline air quality work in the Gros Ventre Wilderness. This work along with campsite monitoring conducted by field crews helped make progress towards meeting the Chief's 10 year wilderness stewardship challenge.

#### **Oil & Gas**

From the 1940's until today, 140 wells have been drilled on the Forest. There are currently 150,100 acres leased on B-T. Of that, 64,300 acres are held by production and 85,800 acres are suspended. There were an additional 44,600 acres that have been offered, but not leased this year. There are 14 operating wells on the Forest, primarily in the Riley Ridge Field south of Big Piney, WY. The B-T is currently completing an EIS for three new proposed wells in the Noble Basin Area.

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