

Casper Recreation News

Note from the Casper Field Manager

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the second edition of Casper Recreation News. I hope you enjoy these updates about Bureau of Land Management (BLM) projects along the North Platte River. I hope you find this newsletter helpful, and I look forward to seeing you on the river.

Joe Meyer, Casper Field Manager

Bureau of Land Management

Construction Continues on Trapper's Route

Trapper's Route Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) is located along the North Platte River near Casper, Wyo. Numerous construction and habitat improvement projects are being implemented this year including campground improvements, interpretive signs and a boat ramp.

Construction work began in the spring of 2008, with work at Pete's Draw Campground, and continues with a number of other projects in the SRMA. The public should expect to see many of changes over the next couple of years.

These projects are vital to the health and welfare of visitors and will improve riparian habitats and reduce impacts to the environment.

Please be patient with our construction crews. Closed areas will be signed on location.

92 Percent Visitor Satisfaction

In 2002, a BLM visitor satisfaction survey indicated that 78 percent of visitors consider the overall management of the river above average. However, the BLM received lower scores for recreational services such as poor maintenance of roads and trails, inadequate differentiation of land status, and lack of sufficient law enforcement.

A second visitor survey completed in 2009 indicated that the recent improvements were met with a positive response. The results demonstrated a 92 percent overall satisfaction rating and a consistent improvement in all scores related to recreational services provided for the Trapper's Route SRMA. Suggestions taken from the survey included upgrades of county and BLM access roads, more recreation facilities, landscaping, additional public acquisitions, and user fees application.



Volunteers float the North Platte River

Travel and Transportation Planning

The Decision Record was recently signed for the Sand Hills Comprehensive Coordinated Travel and Transportation Management Plan. The BLM will use an adaptive management approach as it begins to implement this plan, focusing on monitoring use and the effectiveness of management decisions.

The Casper Field Office will initiate two transportation plans beginning this spring. The Bates Hole Travel and Transportation Management Plan will include a portion of the Bates Hole area southwest of Casper. The second plan will expand the Poison Spider Off-Highway Vehicle Park located just off Zero Road. The public is encouraged to participate, as they provide a wealth of knowledge.

“It’s going to be a long road, and we all have a lot to learn, but we will get there together,” noted Outdoor Recreation Planner Eve Bennett.

Transportation planning is as much an art as it is a science. This type of planning is interdisciplinary and requires a basic knowledge of political sciences and sociology as well as the more traditional sciences such as engineering, biology, and ecosystem management. This kind of understanding can only come from truly listening and being willing to accommodate the needs of diverse publics. It’s going to be a long road, and we all have a lot to learn, but we will get there together.



Your Fee Dollars at Work

In 2009, a total of \$20,000 in standard amenity fees was collected from user fees. In accordance with the Recreation Enhancement Act of 2007, 100 percent of all fees received are retained within the field office and are used to improve and expand recreational opportunities.

These revenues were spent on a cleaning contract which provided portable comfort stations along the North Platte River. This money also allowed BLM’s seasonal staff to complete numerous facility repairs, purchase portal signs, public/private land signs, and supplies for trail maintenance and improvement projects within the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area. Some of the money was also spent on environmental education and volunteer projects.

Plans for this year include installing interpretive signs at the Redds and replacing damaged or missing signs at other locations.

Russian Olives

The Russian olive is deciduous tree or shrub that can grow up to 30 feet high. They are easily identified by the silvery, scaly underside of the leaves and slightly thorny stems. Small, yellowish flowers or hard green to yellow fruit are abundant and occur in clusters. It can form a dense shrub layer which displaces native species and closes open areas.

Russian olive is native to Europe and western Asia and was introduced into North America in the late 1800s. Since then it has been widely planted for wildlife habitat, mine reclamation, and shelter-belts. It first escaped cultivation in 1924 in Utah, establishing itself in all the surrounding states by 1954.

Russian olive can out compete native vegetation, interfere with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves. A large tree is capable of consuming 300 gallons of water per day and can impede the natural flooding cycles. Because Russian olive is capable of fixing nitrogen in its roots, it can grow on bare, mineral substrates and dominate riparian vegetation where overstory cottonwoods have died.



Source: John M. Randall,
The Nature Conservancy, Davis CA



Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)

Natrona County, WY

Although Russian olives provides a plentiful source of edible fruits for birds, ecologists have found that bird species diversity and populations are actually higher in riparian areas dominated by native vegetation.

In June of 2009, a continuous inventory of Russian olive trees was completed along the banks of the North Platte River from Alcova east 70 miles to Converse County. The purpose of the inventory was to establish high priority areas where Russian olives can be treated so that they do not take over the native species (cottonwoods and willow trees) along the river. In the future, biological, mechanical, and chemical types of treatment will be used as needed to reduce the Russian olives to a manageable level.

Cottonwood Plantings

Cottonwood poles are being planted along the North Platte River in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation as part of the effort to restore native species.

Volunteerism Makes a Difference!

It's easy to feel overwhelmed, to throw up our hands in frustration and believe that we are powerless to effect change. Not everyone is concerned with the same issues, shares the same interests, or feels the same way. We all have something to offer. Find what fuels your passion and get involved. Volunteer even if just for one day and the sense of accomplishment will follow.

Last year, the BLM Casper Field Office sponsored several volunteer events, ranging from clearing equestrian and hiking trails to planting trees and cleaning debris from the North Platte River. A number of volunteers regularly give their time to the National Historic Trails Center or to local youth groups. There is no shortage of things to do. Just remember to keep it simple and follow your heart.

Summer Schedule of Events

National Trails Day, Saturday, June 12th
(Muddy Mountain (9:00-3:00))

Climb for the Cure, Saturday, June 26th
(Muddy Mountain (9:00-2:00))

Platte River Revival, Saturday, Sept. 18th
(A National Public Lands Day Event)

National Public Lands Day, Saturday, Sept. 25th
(Muddy Mountain (9:00-2:00))



The Junior ROTC group from Natrona County High School completes 10 years of service.



Volunteers removed debris from the river Banks during for National Public Lands Day 2009.

For more information:

Casper Field Office
(307) 261-7600

www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field_offices/Casper.html