



Wyoming Section Society for Range Management



Spring Issue 2019

Inside This Issue:

President's Message	1
Updates	2-4

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Hello fellow range folks,

It appears that summer has finally come around, although it seemed that most of the state went from winter to summer in a very short time. I hope that everyone is well prepared for a good and busy field season and hopefully the weather will continue to cooperate so we can all work to improve rangelands.

The Wyoming SRM Council met last week to discuss a variety of topics and we had a good and productive meeting. Our annual section meeting planning is coming along quite well already. This year the meeting will be held with the Colorado Section to help build relationships within the sections prior to the 2020 meeting in Denver. The section meeting will be held in Cheyenne this year on October 23rd and 24th, so be sure to put that on your calendars. As more of the details become available those will be sent out to everyone. We also discussed a couple of ESD workshops that will be coming up this summer, details for those are included in the newsletter and be sure to watch for them on Facebook.

A bigger undertaking of the council this year will be working to bring our bylaws and section handbook into agreement with the new committee structure that was implemented last year as well as make any necessary revisions. This will be a lengthy process as we move into the busy season for everyone, but we hope to have it completed this year for approval by the membership. I want to thank everyone who has contributed and agreed to help throughout the process.

WyRED is quickly approaching and it sounds like it will be another successful camp this year. The WyRED committee continues to improve the camp each year and ensure that we have future camps lined up, thank you all for your time and efforts!

The Wyoming Section recently served as a co-host for the Free-Roaming Equid Summit held in Reno, NV May 29th – 31st. Our section joined other sections in the region as well as the parent society in serving as co-hosts. The Wildlife Society also served as hosts both at the national and state levels. We did have some representation from the Wyoming Section at the summit and I hope that it was an informative and productive meeting.

Please remember if there is anything that the council can do to serve you better, please reach out to your council representative or any member of the council. We are here to make your experience in SRM better and will work to do so in any way possible. Wishing you all a great and productive summer!

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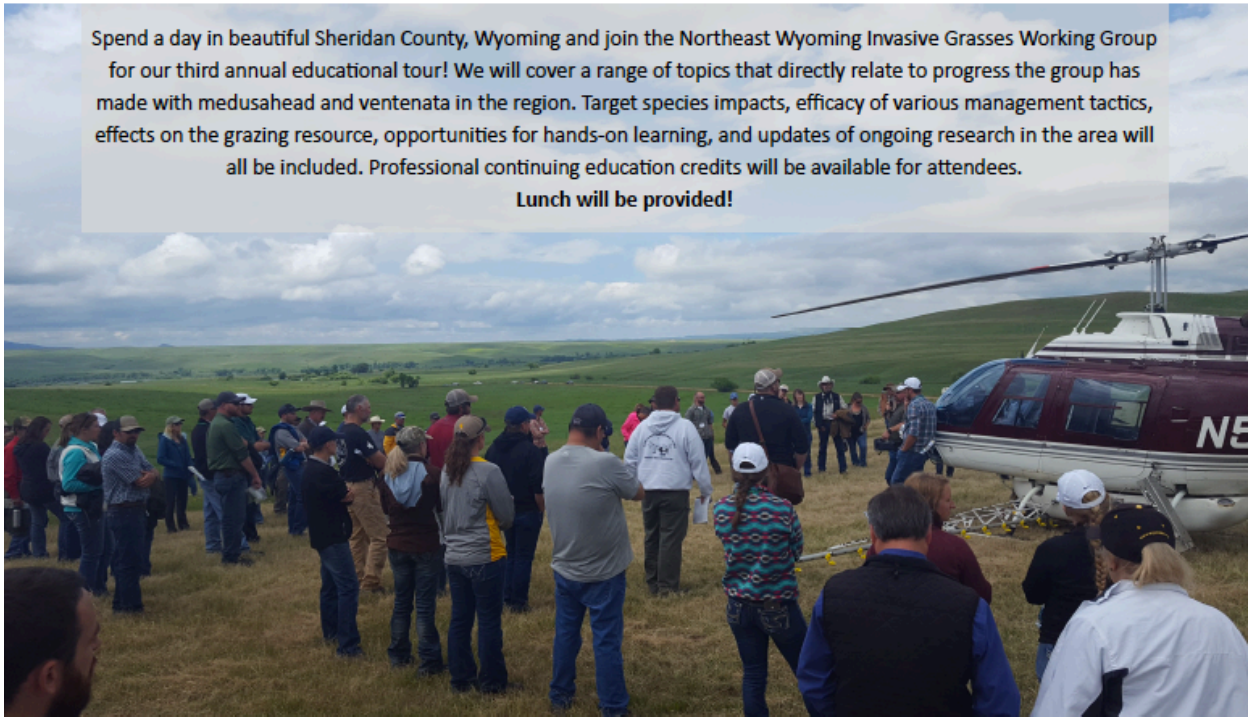


Wyoming Medusahead/Ventenata Field Tour

8am-4pm June 18, 2019 in Sheridan, WY

Spend a day in beautiful Sheridan County, Wyoming and join the Northeast Wyoming Invasive Grasses Working Group for our third annual educational tour! We will cover a range of topics that directly relate to progress the group has made with medusahead and ventenata in the region. Target species impacts, efficacy of various management tactics, effects on the grazing resource, opportunities for hands-on learning, and updates of ongoing research in the area will all be included. Professional continuing education credits will be available for attendees.

Lunch will be provided!



Please register by June 10 at: wymedusa2019.eventbrite.com

Check-in begins at 8:00 am Sheridan College's Whitney Center for the Arts Concert Hall

Livestock vs. Wildlife – Who’s eating the willows

High browse pressure by ungulates is a factor affecting willow (*Salix* spp.) morphology within the riparian communities of the Bighorn National Forest. Since willow browsing by ungulates may be increasing and therefore contributing to the decline in willows, the Forest Service and Wyoming Game and Fish worked to quantify the differential effects of native ungulate vs. livestock herbivory on willow species by partitioning use on willows. We examined the individual and combined effects of multiple ungulate species on annual willow leader browse by percentage of marked leaders removed within willow communities from 2016-2018. This study was carried out on a landscape-scale, primarily within the Clear Creek and Crazy Woman Creek geographic area on the Powder River Ranger District of the Bighorn National Forest in northeast Wyoming.

Livestock exclusion, light stocking rates and moderate stocking rates between allotments did not significantly alter the percentage of willow browsing levels between sites. Livestock exclusion sites ranged from 60-88% annual leader browse. The average percent of leaders removed was 72% (range of 36-100%) across monitored sites on allotments with light stocking rates as well as allotments with moderate stocking rates.

Wildlife exclusion significantly reduced the percentage of willow leaders browsed. The site in a wildlife enclosure resulted in willow browsing use ranging from 27-36% over three years; the lightest browsed site. There was still some limited deer use within the enclosure and 9 pair of livestock placed in the enclosure to mimic stocking rates within the Muddy Creek Allotment.

Willow browsing was consistently high outside of the period that livestock were within monitored pastures, especially prior to livestock grazing, or within areas not grazed by livestock. Willow use by livestock contributed to total willow use, but was 2.5 times lower than wildlife only use in 2016, 2.7 times lower in 2017, and 4.4 times lower in 2018.

Monitoring data support that wildlife have a high browsing impact on willows across the Clear Creek and Crazy Woman watersheds. We suspect that elk contributed most to the wildlife browsing levels observed due to the frequency and quantity of elk observed in the trail camera photos. Elk were consistently showing up at sites around the third week of May through the first week of July after snow is gone and herbaceous vegetation is greening up and growing.

It must also be noted that within our monitoring area, adding livestock use on top of very high wildlife use is intensifying the effects of herbivory on willow health, but livestock are a much smaller contributor than wildlife based on this study. The remaining browsing impacts were some degree of use between moose, cattle, sheep, and deer, in no particular order. Livestock can impact willow browsing but subsequent annual adjustments in livestock grazing intensity can reduce some of this browse pressure at local sites.

Our monitoring has direct implications for wildlife conservation and rangeland management by demonstrating that browsing of willows by wildlife is altering vegetation structure and creating low stature willow communities, whereas this system would be expected to produce tall willow communities. Understanding and managing browsing impacts is critical for maintaining big game populations and livestock production, and conserving other wildlife (such as moose) in heterogeneous landscapes.



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