

Piney Post

A Publication from the Big Piney Ranger District



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In this Issue

- Communities Coming Together
- Featured Photo: Jackie Arnal
- Carnivores on the Bridger-Teton
- Horse Creek Sledding
- Middle Piney Dam Reconstruction
- Wildlife Biology for Third Graders
- Upcoming Projects
- Map of the Big Piney Ranger District

Communities Coming Together

The communities of Big Piney and Marbleton came together this winter to help a young man earn his “Eagle”, and create a way for the Big Piney Ranger District (BPRD) to share news and other pertinent information with the communities it serves. Local Eagle Scout, Kaden Kranendonk (17 years old of Marbleton, WY), in partner with the BPRD created a beautiful three-section kiosk for the front of the BPRD office. This kiosk, once erected, will be a way for the community to find information about their National Forest lands outside of business hours. It will contain information, news, and much much more about what is going on in the Big Piney Ranger District of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Although the kiosk is built, because of the snow and frozen ground, the scout was unable to erect it in front of the office. He and some of the volunteers will return this summer in order to fully assemble it and put it up so that it can be used.



In the BPRD warehouse, debarking the lumber with drawknives

At Williams Automotive, picking up halved logs



-Briana Steele

Featured Photo



Photo taken by BPRD winter patrol, Jackie Arnal, at horse creek. This year has been a snowy one!

Special Thanks:

Boy Scouts of America

the many scouts and scout-masters who volunteered their time to complete this project
(esp. Troop 22, Trapper Trails Council)

Williams Automotive

for their time and equipment to saw some of the lumber

ExxonMobil

for their generous donation used to purchase safety equipment, and other necessary materials



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Layout by: Briana Steele

Carnivores on the Bridger-Teton



For the last 3 years, Forest Service employees in the Big Piney Ranger District, along with numerous volunteers, have been conducting surveys throughout the Bridger-Teton National Forest to determine if Canada Lynx or Wolverines are present in the forest. Across the forest, 54 baited camera traps have been set at remote locations. They are periodically checked, DNA samples collected, and then re-baited. In addition to the cameras, track surveys are conducted on snowmachines to detect use by the elusive animals.

Since 2010, there have been no official detections of a Lynx in the state of Wyoming. However, there have been some wolverine detections in the Bridger-Teton Forest in recent years. Although no lynx or wolverines have been found through this survey on the Big Piney Ranger District, a variety of other critters including mountain lion, bobcat, wolves, fox, coyotes, weasels, and bears have been documented. If any members of the public suspect they encounter a lynx or wolverine or their tracks, please contact our wildlife biologist at (307)276-5813 or rkaiser@fs.fed.us.

-Houston Thompson

Horse Creek Sledding

The winter of 2017 has stacked up for many Sublette County Residents as being one of the best years for sledding in many years. Lifelong Sublette County resident, Robby McNeel, his visiting father-in-law, and brother-in-law enjoy a beautiful sunset at the confluence of North Fork and South Fork Horse Creek following a great day of snowmobiling in the photo below. While Robby enjoys sledding near Gun Sight Pass and seeing the mountains he hunted in the fall covered in snow, Robby and his family favor the Horse Creek area the most. This is mainly due to the great snow and the relatively limited number of people in the vast country of the north-eastern edge of the Wyoming Range. Robby's in-laws, in the past, have sledded in the Big Horns or at Togwotee Pass. However, in recent years they have decided to keep their sleds in Sublette County because they feel that the snow and experience in the Horse Creek area is so much better. We would like to give a huge thank you to Robby for sharing his photo and experiences for the first edition of the *Piney Post*, so he will be receiving a FREE 1 night stay at either of the Big Piney Ranger District's guard stations.

Do you know?

In conversation during the interview for this article, Robby mused at the name "Mount McDougal" because according to all of the "old timers" in the area, the Forest Service has the name of Mount McDougal all wrong and the real name is Mount Dougal. If you know the true history of how the mountain got its name, we would love to hear from you!

Please send your story or thoughts to the *Piney Post's* editor: Briana Steele—brianasteele@fs.fed.us



Robby McNeel and his in-laws Arvin and Duke Beddis enjoying the sunset.

Employee Highlight

Rusty Kaiser



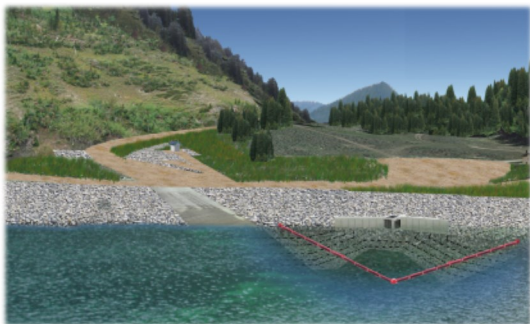
Wildlife Biologist

Rusty started his wildlife career as a field technician on a mule deer project at Utah State University where he received his Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Education. He then earned his Master's Degree in Zoology and Physiology at the University of Wyoming studying sage grouse in the Pinedale Anticline and Jonah Gas Field near Pinedale. He took his first federal job with the BLM in Rawlins as a Natural Resource Specialist and then moved to the Pinedale BLM Field Office as a Wildlife Biologist where he has worked for the past 10 years. Rusty is a Wyoming native and appreciates the opportunity to work for the public in the same National Forest where he grew up hunting and fishing. He is married and has three children, who he takes every opportunity to include in his outdoor adventures.

Big Piney Ranger District
10418 South Highway 189
P.O. Box 218
Big Piney, WY 83113
Phone: (307) 276-5800 Fax: (307) 276-5203



Middle Piney Dam Reconstruction



Middle Piney Dam was originally constructed in 1940 for the purpose of storing irrigation water for local ranchers. The dam was built on top of an ancient landslide complex. As the dam has aged, the outlet works have deteriorated and the dam has developed several areas of seepage. These issues have made it necessary to keep the outlet gate open and forego storage in the reservoir. In 1993, private owners of the dam at the time, began turning over water right shares in the reservoir to the US Forest Service (USFS). Several years ago, due to safety concerns, the Forest Service began considering breaching the dam and returning the reservoir to its natural lake level. However, in 2005, at the request of local irrigators and in an effort to preserve the long held pre-Colorado River Compact water right, the Wyoming Water Development Office (WWDO), a state agency, approached the Forest Service seeking to reconstruct the dam to current day safety standards. Doing so would restore the functionality of the historic reservoir storage right for late season supplemental irrigation, as well as

preserve the secondary benefits associated with fisheries, wildlife habitat, and flood control.

An environmental analysis was completed in 2016. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is in the process of issuing the WWDO a special use permit for re-construction of the dam and a portion of the road below it. This will be followed by a long term special use permit to operate and maintain the dam. If all goes as planned, construction should begin this summer. While this is an exciting project, it does present some challenges and sacrifices, particularly for those who frequent Middle Piney Lake. The WWDO and the Big Piney Ranger District anticipate the area will be closed, and access to the lake will be greatly limited for summer and fall, and up to two additional seasons. These closures will allow heavy equipment to operate safely and provide the space to move and store construction materials. Any limitation of access is frustrating for everyone and we know that area closures will hinder several seasons of recreation. We hope that the benefits of a safe dam and the support it will provide the local economy and ecosystem will be worth the sacrifice. If you have questions or comments on the project or possible area closures, please call the Big Piney Ranger District at (307) 276-5800, and we will be happy to help!

- Don Kranendonk

Photos featured are artist renditions of how the dam and road below it will look once the project is complete.

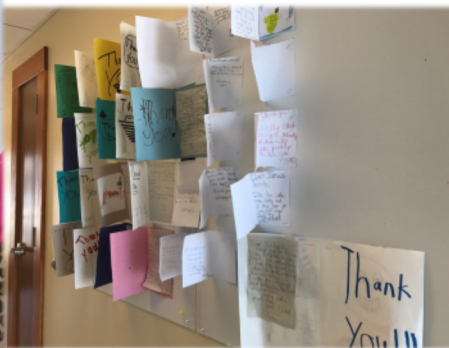


Wildlife Biology for Third Graders

At the annual dog-sled race at Middle Piney this year, Big Piney Ranger District Wildlife Biologist, Rusty Kaiser, provided some educational entertainment to local third graders. Rusty, along with BLM biologist, Mark Thonhoff, taught the kids about using telemetry to track collared animals like sage grouse and mule deer. The kids got to try out the equipment and find the hidden collars. They also took a crack at trapping a sage grouse (which in this case was a duck decoy with a collar on it)! As temperatures dropped, the kids piled onto the bus and were shown a variety of skulls, antlers, horns, and feathers and got to ask all kinds of interesting questions about local wildlife. They were provided with a Smokey Bear book and some stickers and pencils along with a small booklet showing a variety of tracks from animals on the Bridger-Teton Forest. They then left the warmth of the bus to head out and search for any animal tracks they could find. The kids as well as both biologists had a great time. A mother of one of the kids told us, "When she got home, she was so excited. I

think she had more fun with your biologist than actually watching the dogsled races." The Big Piney Ranger District was very excited to receive thank you cards from the kids as well.

- Rusty Kaiser



Upcoming Projects

- Middle Piney Dam Reconstruction
- Horse Creek Parking Expansion
- Fish Creek Trail-head improvement
- Improvement on Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail access at South Piney Creek
- Horse Mountain Trail improvement
- Aerial cheat-grass abatement

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Contact our editor to:

- **SUBSCRIBE to this newsletter!**
- **Submit your own stories, memories, or pictures from the Big Piney Ranger District!** (Articles must be short and positive in nature, and may be edited to fit our formatting and layout.)
- **For more on volunteering, writing articles for this newsletter, or for any more information on anything you have read!**

Piney Post Editor:

Briana Steele

Phone:

(307) 276-5852

Email:

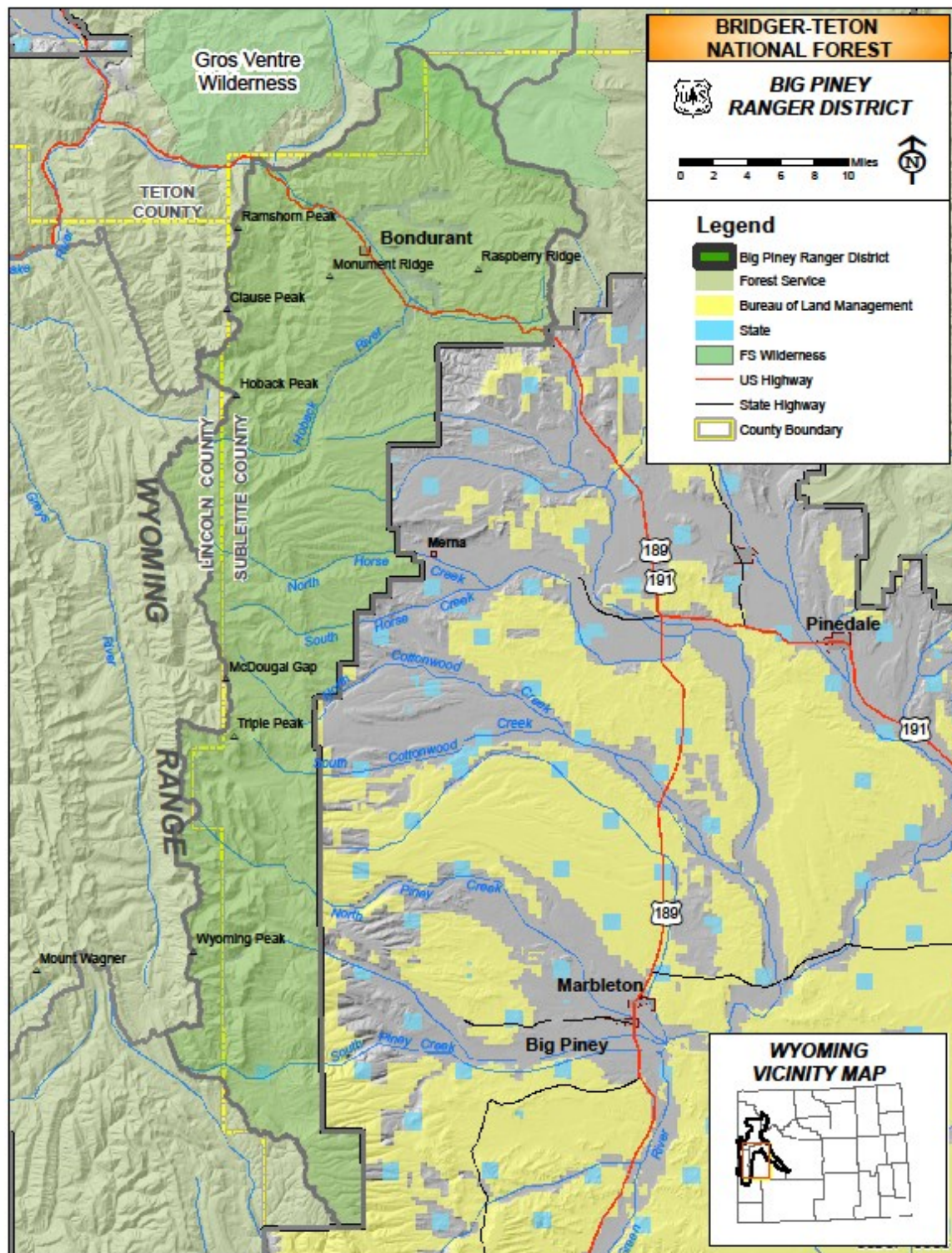
brianasteele@fs.fed.us



Photo Credit: Jackie Arnal

Where is the “Big Piney Ranger District”?

The Big Piney Ranger District (highlighted in the darker green below) is the 449,000 acres on the eastern side of the Wyoming Range. It stretches all of the way from Shoal Lake in the North, to Snyder Basin in the South. The district maintains 300 miles of system trails, 25 permitted summer and fall outfitters, 11 summer homes, two guard stations (available to the public for reservations), and two developed campgrounds.



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