

MAY 19-21 RAVE TO UPPER GREEN RIVER VALLEY & WYOMING RANGE

Guide/Organizer contact information:

Jenny Nichols cell: 703.901.7009

Cristina Mittermeier cell: 703.304.1440

Peter Aengst cell: 406.581.9825

Wendy Shattil cell: 303.906.1604

Linda Baker cell: 307-231-1323 (Pinedale office: 307-367-3670)

Robert Glenn Ketchum cell: 310.503.0322

Ron Chilcote cell: 949.584.2094

Lara Ryan cell: 307-690-9266 (Pinedale office: 307-367-7007)

Background: Wyoming's Upper Green River Valley and its wildlife values

The broad, expansive, and sagebrush covered Upper Green River Valley anchors the southern part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. This Valley is defined as the area within horseshoe of three mountain ranges in western Wyoming (Wind River, Wyoming, and Gros Ventre Ranges). It contains over one million acres of public lands that are within the Bureau of Land Management's "Pinedale Resource Management Area." The Upper Green contains unparalleled wildlife values including:

- Largest block of publicly owned winter range in Greater yellowstone Ecosystem. In fact, over 100,000 big game (elk, antelope, and mule deer) migrate down from the mountains and winter here every year.
- key part of habitat for the nation's largest populations of mule deer and antelope. Impacts to winter range here will have impacts on mule deer and antelope that summer in five different mountain ranges.
- the longest remaining big game migrations in North America outside the Arctic, going on for 7,000 years. This includes the migration of antelope from Grand Teton national park up to 150 miles one way to the heart of Upper Green.
- some of the best habitat and populations left of threatened sage grouse

Background: The Wyoming Range and its values

Located in the Bridger Teton National Forest, the Wyoming Range lies immediately west of the Upper Green River Valley and has tremendous wildlife, recreational, and economic values. It is truly one of Wyoming's hidden gems. Consider:

Encompassing almost 700,000 acres and stretching 150 miles north to south, it contains:

- Streams with four species of native cutthroat trout, only range in the state that can boast this.
- Some of the best hunting areas and trophy specimen for elk, mule deer, moose.
- Half the state's moose population
- Largest roadless area in Bridger Teton national forest and part of largest roadless complex in Wyoming

Background: The Drilling Threat

Besides abundant wildlife, the Upper Green also has extensive natural gas deposits that are being aggressively drilled. Annually over 4 billion dollars worth of natural gas is taken out of the Upper Green. Two fields of "tight sands" natural gas (note: not coal bed

methane) are found in the middle of the Valley, south and west of the town of Pinedale = the 40,000 acre Jonah Field and the 200,000 acre Pinedale Anticline Field. The gas reserves here make these two gas fields the second and third largest onshore in the United States. The Jonah field is permitted for 3,000 wells (approximately 700 drilled to date) and the Pinedale Anticline gas field is currently trying to get an expansion plan approved that would allow 4,300 total wells (approximately 600 drilled to date).

Development of these fields can fragment/reduce critical wildlife habitat, disturb wintering wildlife, or cut off migration routes. These are major industrial zones with roads, truck traffic, noise, lights, staging areas, pipeline corridors, compressor stations, etc. Already the Pinedale Anticline has seen a 46% drop in the number of wintering mule deer and most the sage grouse leks in the Jonah field are already abandoned. Besides wildlife impacts, the gas development boom in the Upper Green is causing significant haze impacts, high ozone (public health) problems, water quality concerns, and socio-economic upheaval.

A key place where the fate of the Upper Green River Valley will be determined is with the new "Pinedale Resource Management Plan" (or Pinedale "RMP") which the BLM has been working to revise over the past six years (over 100,000 Americans commented on the BLM's Draft Pinedale RMP last spring with over 90% supporting the conservation alternative). When finalized later this year, this landscape level planning document will remain in effect for 15-20 years and decide where new federal leasing will be allowed in the Valley, where it will be prohibited to protect wildlife or other values, and where and what stipulations should be imposed. A coalition of conservation, sportsmen, and other citizen groups are pushing for several key areas in the Valley to be protected in the Final Pinedale RMP, including the entire Wind River Front, Uppermost Green River country, Trappers Point-Cora Butte area, Ryegrass, and Cottonwood areas -- among others.

In the Wyoming Range, 75,000 acres are already under lease in the Range but the only part that has seen production is two small gas fields in the Range's southeast portion. However, Plains Petroleum is pursuing development of its lease holdings near the Upper Hoback with proposed access from the Merna side. Their "Eagle Prospect" proposal is currently in the middle of a controversial Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

Just south of Plains' proposal, there is another controversial proposal around new leasing. In 2005-2006, the Bridger Teton National Forest under pressure from the Bush Administration, tried to move forward and issue 44,600 acres of new leases in the gateway drainages of the Wyoming Range (Horse, Cottonwood, Beaver, and others). They were stopped by legal protests filed by conservation groups, Wyoming's Governor, labor unions, outfitters, others that argued that updated analysis and public input was needed. Now, to get around these protests that halted this leasing, the Forest Service is conducted a new EIS on whether to lease these lands or not. At the same time, the "Wyoming Range Legacy Act" has been introduced in the US Senate by Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) that would forever withdraw all of the greater Wyoming Range from any new leasing. On May 7 this bill passed the Senate Energy committee.

Key Photos Needed:

Overall, there are several categories of photos that would be most helpful to the campaigns to protect the Upper Green River Valley and adjacent Wyoming Range:

- Photos showing the beauty and values of key areas under threat in the Wyoming Range. So: aerial or landscape shots of the Plains drilling proposal or its access route (near Merna). Similarly, photos of the 44,600 acres of lands being reviewed in EIS for leasing (so Horse Creek, South Beaver Creek, etc that are accessed west of town of Daniel).
- Photos showing the beauty and values of key areas we are trying to see protected in the Final Pinedale RMP. Especially useful would be good photos of the Ryegrass, Cottonwood, Uppermost Upper Green areas.
- Photos from within the Jonah or Pinedale Anticline gas fields that capture the industrial intensity and impacts of the drilling boom happening there.
- Good wildlife photos, especially any that capture the migration concept or that show wildlife in one of the threatened areas or areas trying to protect (see above).
- Photos that convey the agricultural heritage of the Valley and the connection that exists between healthy ranch lands and wildlife values.

Possible Driving Tours and Stops:

Jackson to Pinedale (or vice versa) = This 90 mile trip (2-3 hours with stops) covers northern end of Wyoming Range and Upper Green River Valley. Follow Highway 191. Soon after Hoback Junction (12 miles south of Jackson) look for big horn sheep along the Hoback River near Camp Creek Inn on the cliffs on the north side above the road. In Bondurant area (Hoback basin) possible migrating big game. Just east of Bondurant, Detour south off highway down dirt USFS road along Upper Hoback road which will take you into Wyoming Range and provides views of part of Plains drilling proposal. Back on highway going southeast, will go over Hoback Rim (high point/drainage divide) and begin to enter Upper Green River Valley. Keep an eye out on both sides of the highway for migrating herds, especially off to the north toward the Wind River Range. Shortly after crossing the Green River, turn left off highway onto Forty Rod Rd. (County Rd. 149, which takes off going east from 191 approx. 9-10 miles south of the Rim). Forty Rod frequently has large herds of pronghorn along it. This road will eventually intersect with County Road 352 near community of Cora. You will cross "Path of Pronghorn" antelope migration route and be in priority area hoping to see protected in Final Pinedale RMP. Go south on 352 a few miles to where it intersects with Highway 191. The area just west of here and this intersection is all part of Trappers Point migration bottleneck (the high butte immediately southwest of intersection and homes is open to public and provides excellent overlook of Green River and Valley). Pinedale is few miles east of intersection.

West Side of the Valley = Go on Highway 191 north/east from Pinedale to Daniel junction. Turn south here on Highway 189. Green river and small town of Daniel few

miles south. Further south, possible visit to Rimfire Ranch (ranchers John and Judy Andrikopolous) which is east of Highway 189 and important wildlife habitat or on county dirt roads to west of Highway into Ryegrass and Cottonwood areas (both wildlife rich areas and areas trying to see protected in Pinedale RMP). Can retrace route back to Pinedale or make loop where head south to Highway 351 junction, go east on this road 24 miles, and then north on Highway 191 back to Pinedale. Going east on 351, you'll cross the Green River again (eagles/raptors along riparian) and then cross the southern portion of Pinedale Anticline gas field.

Pinedale Anticline and Jonah Fields = Driving in gas field without guide can be confusing as roads/intersections generally not marked or signed. Go out of Pinedale west on Tyler street which will climb up on the "Mesa" which is in the Pinedale Anticline field and part of critical big game winter range. After various intersections, will be heading south down the north-south crest of the Anticline field where the majority of drill pads and activity is located. Will eventually pass large compressor facility and water treatment plant and then end up heading east on Paradise River road which will soon cross New Fork River and then end at paved Highway 191. Head north to head back to Pinedale or turn south to go to Jonah field (head around 20 miles south and several miles past Highway 351 intersection to where major gas field road – "Burma road" – goes off to the right/west side of highway).

Wildlife Migration and Habitat in Upper Valley = Go 6 miles west from Pinedale to Trappers Point migration bottleneck and Cora Road junction (country road 352). Go north through Cora. Anywhere along this county road is a good place to spot wildlife. You won't be able to get to the end of road because of snow, but go as far as you can to see migrating herds, especially on the west side of the road. This whole area is also key area ("uppermost Upper Green" and part of "Wind River Front") that trying to see protected in Pinedale RMP. And north of Cora, can visit the O Bar Y Ranch (manager Ron Rhyne) where recently had large wildlife herds and active sage grouse lek.

Foothills of Wyoming Range = From Pinedale, head west on 191 to Daniel junction. Continue west on county road 354 (Horse Creek road). Look for wildlife near riparian areas and bands of antelope/mule deer in area. Eventually get to intersection (Merna) where can continue due west into foothills of Wyoming Range along Horse Creek or turn north towards Hoback Rim. This is proposed access road for Plains drilling and Forest Service lands west of Merna are all part of the 44,600 acres trying to be leased and under EIS process now and would be protected by WY Range Legacy Act). Further back on 354 or south of Daniel on Highway 189 can access South or North Cottonwood creek roads which first travel through important BLM lands that are critical to sage grouse, other wildlife and trying to see protected in Pinedale RMP. Eventually these roads get to national forest boundary and foothills of Wyoming Range where again leasing EIS underway and within proposed withdrawal legislation before US Senate.