Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project

Cultural Resource Report

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Revised February 5, 2015


**Introduction**

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Regulations 36 FCR 800, which implements Section 106, outlines the procedures for the identification of historic properties and for consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office on the affects the undertaking may have on historic properties.

**Overview of Issues Addressed**

The issuance of term grazing permits and the administration and management of rangeland activities associated with term permits for National Forest System lands may affect properties either listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The analysis area for cultural resources are the six grazing allotments that are part of the Upper Green River Rangeland Project. These allotments are Badger Creek, Beaver-Twin Creeks, Noble Pasture, Roaring Fork, Upper Green and Wagon Creek.

**Issue Indicators**

Potential effects on prehistoric and historic sites, and potential effects on unknown sites.

**Affected Environment**

Cultural Resources include prehistoric sites, historic sites, buildings, structures, and traditional cultural properties. These resources are the remains of past patterned human activity. Prehistoric and historic sites can be significant, or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, if they meet one of the following characteristics: 1) associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, 2) associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, 3) embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or 4) have the ability to yield important information about the past. Those sites that have been determined eligible for the National Register are referred to as historic properties.

The Upper Green River area has been the focal point of human activity for much of the last 10,000 years. American Indians relied on the natural resources of this area for centuries before Euro-Americans came to the region. The Upper Green River is a transition zone between the Green River Basin and the mountainous regions of the Wind River and Gros Ventre Mountain Ranges. Prehistoric hunters and gatherers would pass through the Upper Green River Valley following the seasonal migration of big game animals and availability of plant resources. The river valley served as a natural travel corridor connecting the Green River Basin with Jackson Hole and also provided access to Union Pass and the Upper Wind River Valley east of the continental divide. Prehistoric sites are generally identified by scatters of chipped stone tools, flaking debris, ground stone implements, and projectile points. Sites may also contain buried fire pits or other culturally modified artifacts. These sites are classified into three broad categories that include plant processing locations, animal kill and or butchering locations, or short term residential campsites where a wide range of domestic activities took place. The information contained in these sites can provide valuable clues concerning season of occupation, the types of resources being exploited, and possible trade and travel networks to surrounding areas. By the
time European explorers and trappers arrived, this area was home to the Shoshone Indian Tribe, and a sub-band of the Shoshone known as the Sheepeater Indians. Other tribes known to frequent the area included the Bannock, Crow and Blackfoot.

By the early 1800s, Euro-American explorers and trappers had made their way into the analysis area. Some historians point to John Colter as the first of the mountain men to visit the Upper Green River country in 1807, and others were soon to follow. In 1811, Wilson Hunt crossed the Continental Divide at Union Pass, and descending Wagon Creek, entered the upper Green River country. Hunt was bound for the mouth of the Columbia River on the west coast with the intent of establishing a trading headquarters for the American Fur Company. The upper Green River became well known as prime beaver trapping country, and over the next 20 years, fur trapping on the Green River and its tributaries became intense. By 1840, demand for beaver pelts declined, and coupled with the decimation of the beaver population, the trapping industry ended in the Green River country.

The next major influx into the upper Green River country came in 1867. With the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in southern Wyoming, the demand for railroad ties was great. The vast timber resources along the upper Green provided an ideal source for these ties. Charles Delony was contracted to provide these ties, and in 1867 set up a cook shack, commissary, bunkhouse and sawmill on the banks of the Green River at the present day Forest Boundary. Delony continued to cut and haul ties from this area until 1870 when his contract with the railroad was met. Tie hack operations came to a brief halt but began again in 1895 with the creation of the Green River Lumber and Tie Company. The headquarters for this operation were located at what is now the Kendall Guard Station. Tie hack operations were to continue along the Green and its tributaries until 1904. The remains of many of these early tie hack cabins can still be seen throughout the analysis area.

The late 1800s and early 1900s also saw limited gold mine exploration, primarily along Miner Creek, Tosi Creek, Twin Creek, and other tributaries of the Green. These operations never produced significant quantities of gold. Gold mining activities along Miner Creek continued as late as 1980.

Early homesteaders and “dude ranchers” made their way to the analysis area during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Livestock probably began using the area between 1885 and 1890. In 1916 the Upper Green River Cattle and Horse Growers Association formed to make efficient use of the 188,000 grazeable acres of Forest land in the valley. The association began with 20 members who pooled their 11,377 head of cattle. Some early ranchers supplemented their incomes by running trap lines or guiding hunters on big game hunts. The Billy Wells Dude Ranch (also known as the Gros Ventre Lodge), established in 1897 approximately five miles north of the Forest Boundary, was the first known dude ranch established in Wyoming. The remains of this dude ranch can still be seen on the terrace above the Green River.

Federal Government influence in the analysis area began in 1902 with the creation of the Yellowstone Forest Reserve. This newly created reserve was divided into four divisions including the Wind River Division that included all of the analysis area. The headquarters for this division was established at Kendall and the Kendall Guard Station remained in this status until 1909 when the headquarters were moved to Pinedale. 1909 was also the first year of winter feeding of elk along the Upper Green at the Big Bend. A baited trail of hay was laid every ten feet to encourage elk to come down from Green River Lakes, and stay along the upper Green instead of migrating onto ranchlands in the Green River Basin. The herd at that time numbered
around 1,000. During the 1940s, a permanent feed ground was established at the same location for approximately 600 head of elk.

In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) set up a large camp at the Big Bend of the Green River and was responsible for construction of roads and fences and the construction of the Lower Green River Lake Campground. The CCC also conducted stream improvements on Rock Creek and Tosi Creek to alleviate problems caused by floating ties during the tie hack era.

**Existing Condition**

Systematic surveys within the Upper Green River Grazing Complex began in 1975 and subsequent surveys, site identification and monitoring have continued through the 2014 field season. These surveys were conducted for vegetation management, wildlife improvement, recreation development, road construction and maintenance, proposed gravel pit locations, fence line construction, and riparian focus area. Cultural resource surveys conducted specifically for the grazing complex analysis were conducted between 2000 and 2002. As a result of these past surveys, a total of 5,462 acres within the allotment complex has been intensely inventoried for cultural resources. A total of 64 sites have been recorded within the allotment complex. Forty-four of these sites are prehistoric; 13 have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, 28 are not eligible, and 3 are unevaluated. Nineteen sites are historic and include tie hack cabins and tie hack cemetery, the Billy Wells Dude Ranch, and the Kendall Guard Station. Eight of these historic sites have been determined eligible for the National Register, 7 are not eligible and 4 remain unevaluated. One site has both a prehistoric and historic component and has been determined eligible for the National Register. It should be noted that the original EIS for the Upper Green River Allotments listed a total of 68 sites. This number was revised downward because four previously recorded sites were found to be on private lands in the Red Hills area, or were outside allotment boundaries.

A site monitoring and evaluation project was undertaking on 11 prehistoric sites along the Upper Green River during the 2009 field season. Four of these sites were initially recorded in 1975 while the remaining 7 sites were recorded during in 1999 and 2000.

On one of these prehistoric sites (48SU1762), it was noted that a two track road cut through the site exposing buried fire pits and artifacts in un-consolidated sandy soil. These deposits were susceptible to damage from livestock trampling as well as from dispersed recreation activity. Protective barriers were placed along this road cut in an attempt to keep livestock and human traffic from causing damage to the site and to help re-establish vegetation cover on these exposed deposits. This site will be monitored on a yearly basis. If the protective barriers prove to be inadequate for the protection of the site, then consultation with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will be required in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Wyoming Forests, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

It was found that there had been no changes in site condition on the remaining 10 sites since those sites were initially recorded. Livestock grazing was not adversely affecting site condition or the data potential contained on those sites. The Evaluation and Monitoring report was submitted to the Wyoming SHPO with a determination that no historic properties would be affected by continued livestock grazing for the Upper Green River Allotments. The Wyoming SHPO concurred with this determination in a letter dated January 7, 2010. The Tribal representative for the Eastern Shoshone Tribe was also consulted with regards to protective barriers placed on site 48SU1762 as well as livestock grazing in the Upper Green River Grazing Complex on September 2, 2010. Tribal Representative Richard Ferris indicated that the use of protective barriers was an
acceptable method for site protection. He also stated that in general, he is not concerned with
cattle grazing on the forest or potentially impacting prehistoric sites. He likens this activity to
what big game animals or bison would do.

In 2013 the Green River Drift Trail (also known as the Livestock Driveway) was officially listed
on the National Register of Historic Places as a traditional cultural property. The Green River
Drift Trail is the corridor used by the Upper Green River Cattle Association to trail their cattle
from winter and spring grazing areas in the Green River Basin to summer and fall grazing
allotments on the Bridger-Teton National Forest. This drift has been used for more than one
hundred years and has played a pivotal role in the development of ranching in the area. The
designation of the Green River Drift Trail as a National Register property pertains only to the
drift, not to the management of the grazing allotments.

Analysis of site location information for the Bridger-Teton National Forest indicates that on the
average, sites will be found within 206 meters of permanent water, and the average distance to a
major change in vegetation cover, or distance to ecotonal boundary is 69 meters. It was also
found that 90% of all sites recorded on the Forest are on slopes of less than 16%.

Desired Condition

The Bridger-Teton National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (BTNF – LRMP) goal
and objectives for cultural resources provide direction for desired conditions (USDA Forest
Service 1990, pg. 121). Cultural resource values are preserved and protected so that their
scientific, historic, and social values are retained.

Environmental Consequences

Methodology

In 2008 the Bridger-Teton National Forest entered into a Programmatic Agreement among the
U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Wyoming Forests, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer and
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Compliance with the National Historic
Preservation Act. Under the protocol established in this agreement for rangeland management and
livestock grazing activities, the focus of analysis will be limited to livestock congregation areas
and their intersection with areas known or likely to contain cultural resources. Standard predictive
variables for determining where livestock tend to congregate include, but are not limited to, the
following:

a) Adjacent to existing livestock management improvements such as water tanks, fences,
   and handling structures
b) Unimproved areas where livestock congregate to drink
c) Near salting areas

Standard predictive variables for determining where cultural resources are likely to occur include,
but are not limited to, the following:

a) Within ¼ mile of permanent water
b) On slopes of less than 15%
c) On topographic prominences, such as ridge tops, saddles, and high points
d) Near ecotonal boundaries
The intersection of these two variables shall be the focus of the analysis and is considered to be the area of potential effect (APE). If damage or potential damage is noted on newly recorded and previously known historic properties within the livestock congregation areas, but the cause, degree, or extent is unclear, the site will be monitored at least once a year to help determine whether or not protective measures are needed. The Programmatic Agreement also states that all unevaluated sites within the APE will be evaluated for National Register eligibility. The Evaluation and Monitoring report submitted to the Wyoming SHPO in the fall of 2009 focused on those sites that fell within the APE.

**Alternative 1 – No Action**

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

There would be a direct adverse effect to the Green River Drift Trail under this alternative. Because cattle would no longer graze in the Upper Green River area, the Green River Drift Trail would no longer be used and would cease to exist as a traditional cultural property. The Bridger-Teton National Forest would then enter into consultation with the Wyoming SHPO to develop appropriate measures to mitigate the adverse effect. If agreement cannot be reach for appropriate mitigation, the Forest would follow the procedures found in 36 CFR 800.7, which implements the National Historic Preservation Act.

There are potentially some beneficial effects to cultural resources under this alternative. The lack of cattle grazing in the area would reduce the potential for cultural resources to be damaged by activities associated with livestock grazing.

**Cumulative Effects**

The spatial boundary for the cumulative effects analysis is limited to the six allotments within the Upper Green River Area Rangeland Project. The temporal boundary for past activities is arbitrarily set in the 1930s. It is at this time that the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC’s) was employed to construct roads, trails, and the campground at Green River Lakes. These improvements allowed for an increase in recreation activities within the analysis area. Commercial timber harvest followed during the 1940s and 1950s which expanded the road network and resulted in greater surface disturbing activities. The temporal boundary for reasonably foreseeable future activities is five years.

Cultural resource surveys for Forest Service undertakings in the analysis area, as mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act, did not begin until 1975. Prior to that date, there was no consideration for adverse effects caused to cultural resources by surface disturbing activities. It is likely that cultural resources were damaged, altered or destroyed by past activities associated with commercial timber activity, road maintenance, or other activities. In addition, the increase in developed and dispersed recreation activity likely resulted in vandalism and unauthorized artifact collecting. It has been observed that the primary impacts to cultural resources on the BTNF results from intensive human activity. When these activities occur on or near significant historic properties, the result could lead to exposed subsurface cultural deposits or damaged historic structures. These exposed sites are then susceptible to further damage from erosional processes, artifact collecting, and potentially from livestock grazing activities.

It is anticipated that future impacts to cultural resources as a result of Forest Service undertaking will diminish over time. Cultural resource surveys, as mandated by the National
Historic Preservation Act, will continue for all future projects which will allow for the identification significant historic properties so they can be avoided, or adverse effects can be adequately mitigated. Our increased knowledge about where significant sites might be located will also aid in avoiding these sites by future projects. However, as the upper Green River area continues to receive increased recreational activity, it is possible that impacts to cultural resources from vandalism and unauthorized artifact collecting will continue. Future impacts to historic properties are also possible if wildland fires burn through the area, resulting in the loss of standing structures of historic significance.

**Alternative 2 – Grazing as Currently Permitted/Current Management**

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

There is always the potential that livestock grazing could have direct effects to cultural resources. These effects could include trampling or chiseling in damp and/or sandy soils and sloughing and collapse of stream banks. Fire pits and other archeological features that are exposed in road cuts or on the surface of a site can be damaged by livestock as they move across these site areas. Livestock also have the potential for impacting historic structures if they congregate around these structures in great numbers. However where cattle grazing activities are not intense, such as across well managed and healthy pastures with low utilization rates, occasional use would not be considered significant and impacts would not exist. The cultural resource surveys and monitoring of site conditions in the Green River Allotments over the last 40 years indicate that direct effects are not occurring on historic and/or prehistoric sites. The trailing of livestock along the Green River Lakes Road and other locations within the allotments is not resulting in direct effects to cultural resources. This occasional use is not considered significant.

Indirect effects could involve the removal of vegetation and trampling induced compaction that could lead to reduced infiltration rates and subsequent increased runoff that causes sheet erosion. The loss of vegetation can cause the loss of artifact context through down slope transportation, stream bank destabilization, and increased visibility of surface materials and subsequent unauthorized artifact collection. Monitoring of site conditions in the Upper Green River Allotments has failed to detect areas where indirect effects are occurring to historic properties.

There will be beneficial effects to the Green River Drift Trail under this alternative because it would allow for the traditional use of this driveway and recognition of the property’s historic significance.

**Cumulative Effects**

There will be no direct or indirect effects to cultural resources from Alternative 2. As a result, there are no effects to add to the past, present and reasonably foreseeable project activities in the analysis area. Therefore, there would be no cumulative effects to cultural resources under this alternative.
Alternative 3 – Modified Grazing Management

Direct and Indirect Effects

Under Alternative 3, livestock grazing would continue to be authorized using livestock management strategies designed to sustain resource conditions where desired conditions are being met and improve resource conditions where a gap exists between existing conditions and desired conditions has been identified. The cultural resource surveys and monitoring of site conditions in the Green River Allotments over the last 40 years indicate that direct effects are not occurring on historic and/or prehistoric sites. The desired conditions for cultural resources is currently being met, therefore there will be no direct effects to cultural resources.

Implementing a livestock grazing management strategy that includes site specific allowable use standards, focus area prescriptions, structural improvements, and progressive design features to meet of move conditions towards resource objectives will reduce the potential for direct and indirect effects to cultural resources which may not have been previously recorded, or to those sites which are currently buried under soil deposits and are therefore no visibly on the surface.

Cumulative Effects

There will be no direct or indirect effects to cultural resources from Alternative 3. As a result, there are no effects to add to the past, present and reasonably foreseeable project activities in the analysis area. Therefore, there would be no cumulative effects to cultural resources under this alternative.

Alternative 4 – Modified Grazing Management with Riparian Emphasis

Direct and Indirect Effects

There would be no direct or indirect effects to cultural resources under this alternative. Implementing a maximum key forage utilization in riparian/meadows in 4 allotments to 35% has the potential to benefit cultural resources by maintaining or increasing ground cover, thereby protecting any cultural resources that have not been detected or that are currently buried and are not visible on the surface. Reducing the number of livestock or season of use would not affect the Green River Drift because this historic trail would still be used.

Cumulative Effects

There will be no direct or indirect effects to cultural resources from Alternative 4. As a result, there are no effects to add to the past, present and reasonably foreseeable project activities in
the analysis area. Therefore, there would be no cumulative effects to cultural resources under this alternative.

**Monitoring Recommendations**

Yearly monitoring will take place at prehistoric site 48SU1762. Additional monitoring of previously recorded sites will occur as future cultural resource surveys are conducted within the allotment complex.

**References**

