

The projects featured in this story are from the summer of 2012!

# AROUND WYOMING

## HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

**W**hile fire can be a threat to the habitat of humans, it can also be a tool to improve habitat for wildlife. Prescribed burning, or using fire to burn a targeted piece of land, is used across the state. The fire can be used to burn undesirable plants or trees. Smaller fires can also be set to prevent larger, more dangerous fires because the smaller fire burns up all the fuel in a controlled manner. Fire can also help some plant species. Burned



areas re-green very quickly. Heat from the sun absorbed by the burned area warms the soil and plants respond by sprouting and sending up new shoots.

**S**ometimes the wildlife themselves can help improve habitat! In the Sheridan region, for example, 15 beaver were transplanted to watersheds on the Black Hills National Forest. The new beavers built



new dams and created new ponds that will slowly release runoff water. This water will add to the water already flowing later in the year, providing additional habitat for fish and wildlife.

**N**ear Baggs, ten miles of deer proof-fence and a tunnel underpass were built to help prevent wildlife and vehicle collisions. The special fences “guide” the deer to the tunnel that goes under the highway to the other side of the road. These improvements reduced deer and vehicle collisions to less than 50 accidents the year after they were built, when before there were hundreds of accidents. These kinds of projects, completed by the Game and Fish, Wyoming Department of Transportation and local conservation districts, help save the lives of wildlife and people!



**F**ish habitat is also a concern for Game and Fish. In the Jackson region, personnel worked with a private landowner on a fish passage project. An irrigation headgate was acting as a barrier to fish movement, keeping fish from a spawning, or breeding, habitat. A new headgate which included a fish ladder, was designed by the landowner. The ladder isn't really a ladder at all. Instead, it was a huge concrete structure delivered in four pieces. It had to be put in place by a large trackhoe. With the new structure in place, fish can swim up and downstream to their preferred habitat without being blocked.