



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

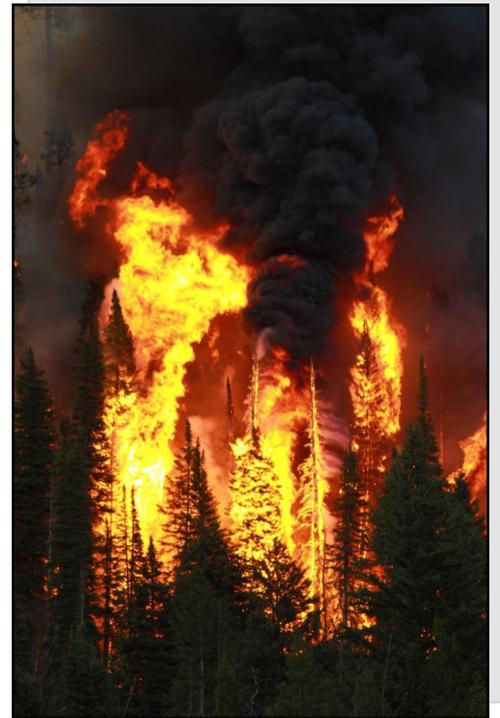
August 2016 Newsletter



## Cliff Creek Fire Benefits Wildlife

The Cliff Creek Fire was first detected on July 17 and burned an area of over 30,000 acres, primarily on the north side of highway 191 between Granite Creek and the town of Bondurant. Fortunately, the fire burned very patchy and a lot of conifers, aspen, riparian and shrub communities did not burn. The current public closure established by the Bridger Teton National Forest runs through Aug. 31. Forest officials will reevaluate the closure area by the end of August and determine, based on fire behavior and predicted weather, if it safe to open to public entry. If so, hunting opportunities for big game should be good this season within the burn perimeter.

In the long term, the mix of different age class vegetation created by the fire should create a nice diversity of forage and cover in close proximity to each other. Fire is a natural process on the western landscape and it appears this fire will benefit wildlife through both the quality and quantity of forage.



*Photos: (Upper Right) Flames from a back burn conducted near Highway 191 on the Cliff Creek fire. Photo by Amy Collett (Left and below) Aerial photos taken by Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall on August 8 showing the patchwork of burned and unburned areas within the burn perimeter.*





# Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

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### Delaneys Named Landowner of the Year

Sublette County landowners Tim and Tina Delaney were recognized as the Pinedale Region's Landowner of the Year at a recent banquet held at Albert Sommers' property west of Pinedale.

Tim and Tina Delaney are landowners who have been dedicated to wildlife habitat ever since they purchased the Rolling Thunder and Rim Ranches, located on the Hoback Rim, south of Bondurant. The properties lie within the acclaimed Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration as well as provide important fawning, summer and transitional habitat used by mule deer that winter south of Pinedale.

The Delaney's have a strong interest in preserving movement and migration corridors on their ranches for portions of the Sublette mule deer, Hoback elk, Sublette pronghorn and Sublette moose populations. To that end, they have established conservation easements on nearly the entire ranch through partnerships with The Conservation Fund, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust. In addition, they have initiated an effort to reconstruct many of their property fences to allow for the unhindered movement of all big game species.

The Delaneys also have been a great partner with the Game & Fish by implementing a number of habitat treatments to promote aspen, grasses and forbs for a variety of wildlife. The Pinedale Region is pleased to honor the Delaneys as the region's Landowner of the Year.



*Pictured (L-R) Game & Fish Director Scott Talbott, Tina and Tim Delaney, Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall, Ranch manager Terry Fieseler, Game & Fish Commission President Carrie Little.*

*Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD*





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## Pinedale Big Game Hunt Forecast

When you've got the smallest human population of any state in the Union on the tenth largest land area, the hunting forecast is always a pretty dang good one. But a variety of other factors are having an impact this year, namely a hot, dry summer led to a very active fire season.

At best, hopefully the weather complications will just lead to a dry, noisy forest. But if it stays hot and dry, Wyoming could see additional fire bans and even some road and area closures inflicted by forest fires. To get the latest info hunters are encouraged to check on possible restrictions at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>

or at local U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management offices.

With all of that in mind, The Wyoming Game and Fish Department anticipates an excellent hunting season and stands ready to help plan your hunt. There are excellent maps online (<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/hunting/hunt-planner>) and hunters can call regional offices or headquarters in Cheyenne with questions.

In the Pinedale Region, the northern portion of the Sublette **antelope** herd includes Hunt Areas 87-91. Population estimates for this herd are below desired levels, so license numbers have been scaled back. For those lucky enough to draw a license, hunting still should be pretty good.

The Wyoming Range **Deer** Herd (Hunt Areas 134, 135, 143-145) is designated as a special management herd which focuses on providing high quality hunting opportunities, mature age class deer and high buck:doe ratios (30-45:100). Buck ratios continue to remain at some of the highest of any in Wyoming. This year observed ratios were 41 bucks:100 does. Post season surveys in December 2015 indicated that fawn survival was below desired levels with 61 fawns:100 does observed compared to 77 fawns:100 does observed last year. Deer numbers have increased slightly after three years of high over winter survival among all age/sex classes. Hunters should anticipate seeing bucks that are 3-8 years of age and exceptional antler growth.



There are four **elk** herds managed in the Pinedale Region. While liberal seasons have been in place for several years, changes are proposed for several of the herds near Pinedale to address changes in the overall population trends. The Piney Elk herd has exceeded the population objective over the last several years and liberal seasons were in place. However, lower elk numbers were observed this past winter and managers have proposed to reduce limited quota licenses and shorten the general elk season. The general season will close on November 10 for antlerless elk in both the Piney and Pinedale elk herds.



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## Helping Mule Deer Movements

Pinedale Game and Fish employees Jill Randall, Troy Fiesler and Dean Clause joined forces with 10 livestock grazing permittees to remove an unnecessary barbed wire fence in the Webb Draw area near Merna. The group spent the day removing one mile of four-wire fence that was no longer needed for livestock management. The fence intersected a significant stopover area and migration corridor for mule deer that winter in the Ryegrass area of the Sublette Mule Deer Herd.



## Jill Randall Honored

The Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT) recently named Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall as their 2016 Partner of the Year. The award is given annually to one group or individual for exemplary conservation work in Wyoming. "Jill Randall is the epitome of conservation in western Wyoming," Board Chair Kim Floyd said in presenting the award. "She has been a consistent partner of ours since the inception of the trust and the footprint of her work covers hundreds of thousands of acres with dozens of different partners." Randall was cited for her work in the Wyoming Range, particularly prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, research, and invasive species control to enhance habitat for mule deer and other wildlife. Board Vice-Chair Steve Meadows said, "Jill's enthusiasm and energy is infectious. You get out in the field with her and you see so much potential and so much accomplishment that you want to turn her loose on the rest of the world." Meadows also lauded her ability to bring diverse groups together for a common cause. "She works well with everyone," he said. "You'll have landowners, conservation groups, state and federal agencies all sharing in the effort and the results, and that is exactly the kind of energy we need to get things done in Wyoming."



*Jill on a past prescribed burn in the Wyoming Range*



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### Monitoring Burbot

Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea spent much of July working on the burbot graduate research project on the Green River near LaBarge. Several burbot were captured, tagged and released back into the river (right). An array was installed to detect whenever a tagged fish passes by to help determine the fish's travel patterns.



### Hatcheries at Work

Wyoming Game and Fish hatchery personnel do more than raise a lot of fish. They are also in charge stocking fish all across the state. The Boulder Hatchery staff stocked out some 7,500 fish during the month of July and also assisted the statewide spawning and distribution crew with helicopter stocking in some area Wilderness lakes (right). Both the Boulder and Daniel hatcheries each had nearly 100 visitors in July as well.





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### It's Fishing Season

It's the peak of the summer and anglers are out in force across the region. All the Pinedale game wardens have been busy contacting anglers and generally report good fishing. A number of anglers took advantage of the July 16 opener for North Piney Lake in the Wyoming Range, including young Julia Hymas (right) with a hefty Colorado River cutthroat. (Below) An angler's displays a nice brook trout caught at an alpine lake in the Winds.



### Boat Rescue

South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft and Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas (below) were able to rescue this boat after thunderstorms caused it to blow out of a bay and across Fremont Lake. The boat was returned to its very thankful owner who will likely be tying the boat after docking it in the future.

