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UNITED STATE GOVERNMENT

Department of Agriculture – Forest Service
Bridger National Forest
Thayne, Wyoming 83127

Memorandum

TO: Forest Supervisor File No. 1650
FROM: Ralph R. Dymont, DRF, By Date: April 14, 1965
SUBJECT: Historical Data Your reference:

Attached is the history of the Thayne Ranger District as you requested regarding the following subjects:

1. Early administration
2. General administration and operation
3. Watershed and Multiple Use Management
4. Range Management
5. Timber Management
6. Wildlife Management
7. Engineering
8. Recreation
9. Fire Control
10. Personnel

Included also are some items from our files which you may or may not want. If you do want them would you have them duplicated and return the original to us. Also enclosed are negatives for the pictures that the report mentions if you want to use them.

Enclosures:

JLSevy:wyc

Jay L. Sevy

HISTORY OF THAYNE RANGER DISTRICT

4-14-65

EARLY ADMINISTRATION

The following men have been rangers on the Thayne (Formerly Bedford) Ranger District.

John W. Davis	1918-1923
Fred Graham	1923-1931
George E. Turney	1931-1933 35
L. H. Gardner <i>Garner</i>	1933 35-1934 36
L. G. Woods	1934 36-1937
M. J. Markham	1937-1949
Vernon Brewer	1949-1958
Milton C. Sill	1958-1962
Ralph R. Dymont	1962-Present

The below picture is of Ralph R. Dymont taken in May 1964. [*Editor's Note: The photos, which are poorly photocopied, are not replicated here.*]

Early forest management in the area was primarily custodial in nature but gradually intensified as time passed and demand for forest uses increased.

Originally appropriations covered only the rangers salary, and very little was available for equipment or improvements. He generally furnished his own horse for government use.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION

A CC Camp was located near the district in Grover Park in the 1930s and that program was active on this district. They worked on the Greys River road, campground construction, construction of the phone line, and they built the Bedford Dwelling in 1932. The Bedford Dwelling is the old Plan I design. The house was remodeled in 1963. This consisted of putting in permanent type stairs to the upstairs rooms, adding on a bedroom, reroofing, and remodeling the upstairs bedrooms. Prior to the building of the present dwelling the old building, still standing, across the road was used.

In 1962 and 1963 Public Works Accelerated Program (PWAP) funds were used on the district and the following work was done.

1. Post peeling and treating plant constructed and put into operation at Bedford. Posts were treated by the double-diffusion method while they were still green.
2. Bedford warehouse was reroofed and concrete floor laid in remainder of building that did not have it.
3. Thinning was accomplished on the old Tool Creek Burn.
4. Barrier logs were cut and peeled for use over the entire forest.
5. Part of the Greys River road was graveled.
6. Range Management buck & pole fences were constructed from bucks that were built at the Bedford plant.
7. The Greys River road right-of-way was cleaned of trash and debris.

The below picture is of the post peeling plant that was operated with PWAP funds.
[Editor's Note: No photo is included with the photocopy.]

WATERSHED & MULTIPLE USE

There was a watershed study made by Ranger Turney in 1930 in the Dry Canyon area. It was a photography study and illustrated that at that time that a severe erosion problem existed on the sheep driveway in that area.

On August 8, 1947, a cloudburst in the mountains East of Bedford caused a flood in Lost Creek which carried a large head of mud and water out of the canyon, however no large rocks or piles of debris were deposited on the farm land. One ranch lost a garage, barn, chicken house, one cow, and approximately 250 chickens. Grain crops were mashed down and pasture land was covered with a film of mud. Total estimated damage was about \$3000.00 to this one farm. The flood ran about 3 miles before it lost its velocity. The same canyon flooded previously in 1930. The 1947 cloudburst also caused a flood in White Creek but this wasn't as well known or publicized.

Following is a news article written on the Lost Creek as it appeared in the Star Valley Independent at Afton, Wyoming, dated Thursday, August 14, 1947.

FLOOD NEAR BEDFORD CAUSES HEAVY DAMAGE OF PROPERTY AND FARM CROPS

“One of the worst floods in the history of Star Valley occurred Friday evening, August 8th, following a cloudburst in the mountains east of Bedford. Fortunately no lives were lost, but the damage was estimated at several thousand dollars. The Wm. Nebeker family suffered the severest loss, as their farm was in the direct path of the 3 foot wall of water that crashed through their yard and spread over their field. Their garage, barn, tool shop and chicken coop were all swept away and the water raised to the level of their dining room windows before it subsided. Mrs. Nebeker and son were in the barn milking when they heard the roar of the flood coming. They rushed to the house, which stayed on the foundation, although it was flooded to the windows.

One cow, locked in the stanchion in the barn and 250 young pullets ready to start laying, were killed.

About 200 acres of fine grain field, also the garden and pasture were covered with from 6 inches to 12 inches of mud, and the canals and irrigation ditches were filled up.

Other farmers who suffered losses in this unusual Star Valley flood are: Russell Wilkes, Wm. Rickenbach, Quin Astle, Frane Wilkes and Conway Wilkes.

Warren Preston who is herding sheep in Lost Creek canyon, lost his tent and supplies and several sheep in the flood. The water mark on the trees at the mouth of the canyon indicate that the water was 18 feet deep at that point. Great boulders were washed down, and it is very fortunate that the farm homes are located several miles from the canyon, or rocks and boulders would have covered their places and their homes would have been gone.”

District records show that other streams also have flood histories. Also several land slides have occurred on the district in the past, but have not been recorded as to date etc. From past records, it is quite evident that there has been a gradual change in the philosophy of watershed management from one of little concern regarding watershed management to one of great concern. Likewise there has been a gradual change and strengthening of the Multiple Use Concept bringing it to the importance that it now holds today. However, it has been only in the last 4 years that it has actually been recognized as a land management philosophy and method, and applied as such.

The Willow Creek Watershed Restoration Project was completed in August 1962. This project involved contour trenching and seeding 350 acres and seeding another 380 acres. This work was done near the head of the Willow Creek drainage. To date the project appears to have been a success.

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Included here is a letter written by Mr. A. A. Covey that gives a history of his operation up to 1945. The letter was written to Ranger Markham. It reads as follows:

Cokeville, Wyoming Feb. 15, 1945

Mr. Murle J. Markham,
Forest Ranger, Bedford, Wyoming

Dear Mr. Markham;

Sorry to have been in Denver & Laramie for the past month and only on my return have I come around to answering your letter of Jan. 30, regarding early users of the part of the Bridger Forest known as the Middle Ridge.

We first run sheep in Wyoming winter of 1895-1896. The Spring of 1896 we came into the Cokeville country and that summer we run three bands on that part of the country where we now run our dries and bucks or about where the road crosses the divide between Salt Canyon and Salt River and west from there to the Idaho line. This is the country between Spring Creek and the South boundary of what is known as the New Addition and West of the Main road. Other early users of the new addition, upper Smiths Fork, Upper Salt River country, and the head of Greys were L. A. Marks, Sol Anderson, Johnson Brothers, Clark & Elquist, Quale Brothers, Mumford Brothers and Closner. Most of these outfits had not been in these parts for long. Pete Olson had run sheep in the Smiths Fork country but had gone out of the business. Closner was the oldest user at that time.

That year myself and a herder of ours packed into the head of Greys and on down it to the mouth of Sheep Creek and then tracked back across the mountain into Strawberry and down into Star Valley. A few sheep at that time had reached the head of Greys River but none got further north than Corral Creek. Greys River evidently had been a Rendevous for the Indians for there was many places where they left their wicky-up poles, camp ashes, etc. Plenty of 4 to 6 pound trout in Greys then.

The summer of 1897 we ranged our sheep on the heads of Cottonwood, Dry and Swift Creeks. There was no evidence of any sheep having been in those parts prior to then. The following summer we used this same country as well as upper Greys River. About July 20th of the following year we took one herd up Box Canyon and two south of the Twin Peaks, (Mount Coffin and Wyoming Peaks) on to the Piney slope, then they leisurely drifted north as far as the head of South Cottonwood. That summer I herded one herd in the head of Cottonwood and trailed it out south to the smooth ridge south of the Twin Peaks, west across the Poison Meadows and into Salt Canyon country. Range was not crowded, feed was plentiful and every thing went easy. We all walked. Camp mover had only two horses which he packed and led. These were the first sheep ever to go onto the Piney slope. It was about Oct. 1st when we brought them back into the Greys

River drainage. Although they were fat the lambs weighed only about 70# average. Did not have very good breeding in our sheep then.

The whole situation changed the next year for in the spring of 1900 Tim Kinney brought 100,000 head of ewes into the Cokeville country. They overran the country and packed the range. There was never enough country for this big influx. Kinney found this out and in two or three years was selling many of them. In order to keep out of the jam we lambd our sheep well north, on the head of Thomas Fork and along the west side of Star Valley as far north as Auburn. After shearing we moved into a new summer range further north than any sheep had previously been. Our herds crossed Star Valley and went up Dry Canyon, Strawberry, Cedar Canyon and the Stewart Trail, over Greys River into the Blind Bull, Deadman, North Cottonwood, Horse Creek, Upper Hoback, Roosevelt Meadows, Cliff Creek, Willow Creek and Little Greys River country. Some country for 22,000 ewes and their lambs. Herds were from 3700 to 4200 in size. They never run over the same ground twice, were loosely herded and apparently done no damage to the country. The last of our herds going out crossed Greys near the mouth of Little Greys Oct. 20th that year. After snows started they were grazed on the lower areas near Little Greys Meadows and North. It was our practice to bring about 4 herds out each week beginning about Oct. 5th.

These were the first sheep that had ever grazed from Sheep Creek north and east of the Greys. When we first went on the Middle Ridge. This same year we heard of some sheep that had crossed the lower Star Valley and trailed up Stewart, over the top on Greys River slope. We concluded that they did not cross the river for there was no evidence of them having been on the Middle Ridge. These sheep had come from the Soda Springs area.

From then until now the Covey & Blaney Sheep have had their allotments on the Middle Ridge. They have gradually been in smaller and smaller bands and last summer less sheep used this range than had since the forest was created.

This letter is very much a history of the operations of our outfit but as we were the first to go into much of the range embraced in the Bridger and Teton Forest they link in.

I was in charge of the outfit at these dates and what I say I am sure of.

As to the Hams Fork and LaBarge country's history I am not so well informed. There was one large outfit owned by Al Stead that lambd and sheared north of Fossil and west of Hams Fork that summered as far north as LaBarge. Another outfit owned by Hy Smith and another by Charley Robinson of Opal that also used part of the Bridger east of Smiths Fork. Stead and Smith had ranches in Green River.

Answering your letter as to the number of herds we run in the early days I wish to say that we had 2 winter bands the first year 1895-1896. Winter 1896-1897 we ran 5 bands, winter range bands had 3300 to 3500 head in them. The fall of 1899 we bought the Quayle Brothers sheep about 17,000 head and after shipping the mutton from them

we wintered about 22,000 ewes. These increased until year 1907 we had about 35,000 on the winter range. The old E. Covey & Sons outfit split into three, known as Covey & Blaney, Star Valley Livestock Co., and the Afton Livestock Co. Our present outfit is the only remaining one and it includes the Tim Kinney outfit which we bought the winter of 1928-1929. The Kinney outfit had by then swindled down to between 14,000 and 15,000 head.

I feel that the Cokeville country is one of the best all around sheep producing parts of the west. We have the reputation of having some of the best sheep of any. It is largely the good range that makes good sheep. As far as I can remember I have never seen more feed on our winter range than we have this year. We are shipping heavier lambs than ever in our history. We have a stabilized well rounded out business and though I formerly had a notion that I would feel like retiring I now plan on being in and going as long as I can look after the business. Its tough to operate now but that will not last long.

If there is more that you want to know that I can furnish I will be pleased to give it to you. Sheep are doing fine this winter.

Best Regards, /s/ A. A. Covey

Following is data involving some of the allotments on the district.

Bear Wallow S&G

This allotment was used by the Afton Livestock Co. prior to 1940. This preference was transferred to Joe Linford at this time when he bought one of the Afton Livestock Co. bands.

Little Greys C&H

This allotment has been used by cattle since 1904. Records do not show amount of use between 1904 and 1924. Between 1924 and 1941 the average use was 3300 A.Ms./year. Obligation on the allotment now is 2227 A.Ms./year.

N. Middle Ridge S&G

Covey obtained the preference on this allotment from Star Valley Livestock Company in 1914.

Sheep Mtn. S&G

L. W. Roberts acquired this preference from his father Fred Roberts in 1930. Fred had the allotment from 1906 to 1930. The sheep trail to this allotment was retired from use in 1943. The new route went up the North Fork of Sheep Creek.

As early as 1930, it was evident that sheep driveways on the district were serious erosion areas. Apparently the driveways were established in the early 1900s as most of the allotments were formed. They exist today and are still used much the same as they were then. They still present a serious erosion hazard and problem. Steps are presently being taken to alleviate the driveway problem.

Records show that range improvements have been made steadily throughout the years, and that real attempts to improve range management were made, however concepts have changed, and many of the improvements constructed years ago are located on what is now classified as unsuitable range. Many of the improvements were made in the 1930s.

Grazing seasons have gradually shortened over the years. Seasons in 1908, 1909, and 1910 were as follows:

1908	C&H	5/15 - 10/15
	S&G	5/15 - 9/10
1909	C&H	5/15 - 10/31
	S&G	5/15 - 10/31
1910	C&H	5/15 - 10/15
	S&G	7/15 - 9/30

This is quite different from the present season especially regarding starting dates. Seasons now are generally from early June to the middle of September.

Range reductions have been made on a gradual basis over the years. Records do not show any major reductions being made, but do indicate that small reductions were made from time to time conjunction with preference transfers etc.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Timber harvesting activity started on the Thayne Ranger District as early as 1879 when the settlement of the Star Valley area began. Timber harvested during this period was all used locally for construction of buildings, firewood etc.

Activity increased concurrently with settlement of the area and the need for practicing timber management began to become evident. The first timber surveys were made in this area in the period from 1922 - 1924. A Management Plan for what was then the Star Valley Working Circle was formulated in 1929.

Excerpts from the 1929 Management Plan

The management plan specified a rotation of 120 years with a 40 year cutting cycle. The silvicultural system to be used was a selection method of cutting. The plan stated that at that time growth and decay practically balanced, and that the trees were averaging a growth of about 1" every 10 years, and that about 30 board feet/acre was being grown.

The management policy of the plan was as follows:

1. Production of timber to supply the wood needs of the residents of Star Valley.
2. Place the working circle on a sustained yield basis by regulation of the cut.

3. Develop a market for the surplus timber.

The Silvicultural policy of the plan was as follows:

1. Removal of the mature, defective, diseased and otherwise undesirable timber first and to prevent a control insect infestations, porcupine, and other damage.
2. To put the stands in growing condition using the selection system of marking.
3. To promote thinning in immature stands as much as possible consistent with present economic conditions.

The management plan stated that there were the following mills in the area at this time (1929).

<u>Mills</u>	<u>Daily Capacity</u>
Gardner Brothers – Aftton	10,000
Star Lumber and Milling	15,000
Mill at Auburn	5,000
Merritt & Turner Sawmill Co.	5,000

Some of the material from these mills was shipped to Cokeville, however, this was only a small amount.

District records show that the following amount of timber was cut during the following years:

1928	249,680
1929	259,000
1930	119,410
1931	231,320
1932	66,960
1937	91,780

Timber activity increased in the 1940s, as much of the timber was cut for the production of railroad ties.

There has also been an increase in timber activity since that time. The 1950s saw quite a number of larger sales being made, and two fairly large mills were constructed in 1964.

- Greys River Lumber Co. – Constr. 1964 – Capacity 5,000,000 bd. ft. annually.
- Star Valley Lumber Co. – Constr. 1964 – Capacity 30,000,000 bd. ft. annually.

The following large sales were made in more recent times:

Mann Cr. Sale	4,530,000	Cliff Creek Lumber Co.	6/10/60
So. Murphy Cr. Sale	4,372,590	Greys River Lbr. Co.	10/30/57
Porcupine Cr. Sale	4,267,690	Montana & Idaho Lumber Co.	5/7/59
White Cr. Sale	7,100,000	Greys River Lbr. Co.	5/5/59
Three Forks Sale	17,250,000	Star Valley Lbr. Co.	6/4/63
Meadows-Cabin Sale	8,280,000	Star Valley Lbr. Co.	11/13/64

In addition to these there were numerous smaller sales made during this period. The last sales that have been made have been for the most part cut by clear-cutting and slash disposed of by broadcast burning. This is quite a change from past management methods. In the past, most of the cutting has been done under selection methods and slash has been piles and burned.

The Star Valley Lumber Company mill is a stud mill and is capable of economically processing small trees. This also has changed timber management practices in this area in that smaller size trees are being harvested.

Records indicate that there had been little T.S.I. work or planting accomplished as of 1955, however, planting and T.S.I. work was initiated in the Spring of 1964 on past timber sales.

There was insect control work in the Greys River in approximately the 1930s, however, there is no record as to the actual dates, size of project, etc. An intensive timber survey was made during 1957 and 1958 and a timber management plan for the forest was completed and approved in 1965.

Wildlife Management – (Excerpt from management plan written by Charles Sundstrom, 1964)

Records indicate that elk have always been numerous in this area. The Star Valley front with its sagebrush-grass and aspen types was noted for the large numbers of elk that inhabited it when the early settlers came to the valley. An old time resident, Mr. Charles Anderson, states that when he was a boy around 1896, he remembers “white tail” deer along the Salt River bottoms and even antelope in Star Valley.

With regard to predatory animals, the following table compiled in 1934 by District Ranger George A. Turney will prove interesting: Numbers in the area were:

	<u>Coyote</u>	<u>Lynx</u>	<u>Mt. Lion</u>	<u>Wolf</u>	<u>Porcupine</u>	<u>Black Bear</u>	<u>Grizzley Bear</u>
1930	400	30	1	1	400	70	3
1931	100	25	2	1	300	50	5
1932	100	25	2	1	300	50	5
1933	75	25	2	0	300	50	5
1934	150	10	0	3	1000	30	2

A history of some early Wyoming Game Laws is also interesting.

- 1868 Territory of Wyoming established.
- 1869 First game law passed by Congress – Prohibited offering elk or other big game for sale between February 1 and August 15.
- 1871 Killing of elk was restricted. Closed season of elk and other big game from March 1 to August 15.

- 1886 Non-residents were prohibited from killing elk.
- 1890 Open season was abolished and the killing of elk and other big game was prohibited throughout the year.
- 1895 Fish Commission, established 16 years previously, had its jurisdiction extended to include game.
- 1895 State passed \$20.00 non-resident license law.
- 1899 Guide license required.
- 1903 Non-resident license raised to \$50.00.
- 1904 Tusk hunting started.
- 1905 Wyoming law required a license for photographing big game.
- 1907 Hunting elk for their teeth or “tusk hunting” made a felony.

As Star Valley was settled, crops cultivated, and domestic grazing animals took over the open range, the game, principally elk, were forced back into the Days River country, or what is now known as the Greys River country.

Indications are that game enforcement was slow to evolve in the area. “Tusk” hunting of elk, made a felony in 1907, was freely practiced. Reports are that as late as 1919 a tusk hunting party was arrested with a salt sack full of teeth. An excerpt from a 1934 wildlife management plan by District Ranger George A. Turney states the following:

“It has only been of recent years that the restriction of elk hunting to one head per license has been in effect. Due to the fact that the majority of hunters are local residents and are not interested in trophies most of them go hunting for meat. Therefore it is the general practice of hunters in this vicinity to kill a cow or calf even to the exclusion of passing up a bull elk.”

In the early days of the settling of Star Valley and for some years thereafter, old time residents report that Indians from Snake River established summer hunting camps in this area. Meat and hides were obtained and cured by the Indians for winter use.

It is assumed that the original intent of the Days River Game Preserve and Star Valley Game Preserve was to increase the elk population. The Days River Game Preserve was created in 1917 and remained closed until 1944. In 1934 the Star Valley Game Preserve was created and was closed to hunting for several years thereafter. Apparently the elk population increased and damaged hay stacks of farmers residing adjacent to the preserve. To eliminate this damage a short season was provided for several years. This

did not bring about the desired decrease in population. During the winter of 1942-43, there was a heavy fall of snow. Elk started to work on the hay stacks in October and in December these stacks were supplying most of the elk feed. A wildlife Federation meeting was held in Afton to determine what steps could be taken to eliminate this damage. Due to the fact that the elk were scattered and in many small bunches it was impractical for the game department to initiate a feeding program. The solution seemed to be removal of the elk working on the stacks. This was done by the State Game Department. Approximately 100 head of elk were killed. Eighty-six of these were given to schools, institutions and sold to residents at prices ranging from \$10.00 to \$15.00 per head.

Near the mouth of Greys River in this same year, there were 700 head of elk congregated on State and Forest land. These were fed 105 tons of hay and 34 tons of cotton cake. Feeding started December 9 and continued until April 15, 1943, a period of 127 days. As near as we can tell from available information, the first feed grounds in the Salt River-Greys River area were created during the winter of 1941-42. The State had five emergency feed grounds located as follows:

1. Mouth of Greys Rivers
2. Squaw Flat
3. Forks of Little Greys and Big Greys River
4. Deadman
5. Sheep Creek

The feed ground at the mouth of Greys River was off the forest and on State land. This was and still is the principal feed ground. The other four were situated at strategic locations along the main river and consisted of metal granaries in which baled hay and oil cakes were stored for feeding in severe winters. The elk harvest in this area has averaged 454 elk per year since 1937. The lowest harvest year was 1944 when 74 elk were taken and the highest harvest of 717 head in 1952. It is interesting to note that the Greys River drainage was placed under the permit system in 1944 when 150 permits were issued. This practice was continued in 1945 when 200 permits were issued. The area was kept under the permit system in 1946 but no record of total permits issued is available. The Greys River area was taken off the permit system in 1947. The area remained off the permit system for one year. From 1948 to 1951 inclusive, 600 either sex permits per year were available. Since 1952 to present, the area has remained off the permit system.

The below picture was taken of elk on the feed ground North of Etna, Wyoming in January 1957. [*Editor's Note: The photo, which is poorly photocopied, is not replicated here.*]

Engineering

The main road on the Thayne District is the Greys River road. It was first constructed in the 1930s by the CCCs and was partially re-surveyed and reconstructed approximately 1955. Additional reconstruction work was done beginning in the fall of 1964 and at present is still under contract.

Resource aerial photography was accomplished and photos obtained on the district in 1957.

The forest phone line was constructed from the Forks to Meadow Creek in 1932 by the CCCs.

Radios were first used on the district in 1938. These were the old SPF type radios. High frequency radios came into use in 1960.

Recreation

The National Forest Recreation Survey was completed on the Thayne District in 1959. It indicated that there are 51 potential recreation sites on the district. There are six developed recreation sites. These were originally constructed by the CCCs and were reconstructed in 1963 and 1964. Five of the six were reconstructed with A.P.W. funds. There is also a commercial marina near the Snake River bridge. It was developed as a result of the completion of Palisades Reservoir in 1958. Summer home policy on the district is that there will be none as there is adequate private land in the vicinity to take care of this demand. This may change in the future.

Recreation use on the district to present time has been primarily by local people (Wyoming residents) and the area has not been used heavily.

Future use is expected to increase substantially as the area is becoming well known in the more heavily populated areas in Utah and Idaho. The area is becoming well known for its excellent hunting and fishing values.

Fire Control

Pearson-Henderson Burn

This was the largest fire that ever occurred on this district that there is record of. It was started by a campfire left by a shepherd as the sheep were coming off of the range in late September of 1934. It burned 6000 acres and was not controlled as a result of fire fighting efforts, but as a result of a snow storm. Previously in 1931 a 200 acre fire was caused by insect control activities in the same area of the Pearson-Henderson burn.

Other Fires

The Cabin Creek-Deadhorse fire and another fire on the Middle Ridge burned in 1940. Each of these were the result of lightning.

District records show that the primary cause of fire on this district is lightning, and that there has been a small increase in the number of man-caused fires over the years. This due to increased activities on the district.

Fire prevention activities on the district started in the 1930s. Since that time they have evolved to their present level. Also new detection methods were incorporated with the

advent of the use of aircraft. As most of the fires on the district have been small, suppression of fires has been mostly by use of hand tools. However, mechanized equipment is available for use if needed. The below picture is one recently taken of the Pearson-Henderson burn. *1964*