



News Release

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
<http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>

Media Contacts: Aaron Voos, U.S. Forest Service, (307) 745-2323
Jessica Clement, Ph.D., Ruckelshaus Institute, (307) 766-5048

Public Invited to Thunder Basin Collaborative Learning Workshop in Douglas

(DOUGLAS, Wyo.) January 15, 2016 – The University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources will convene the first of three collaborative learning workshops regarding the greater Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG) landscape on Thurs., Jan. 28.

All workshops are being held on behalf of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the initial event will take place from 1-4 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at Eastern Wyoming College in Douglas, Wyo.

The interactive meeting will explore the rich history of the National Grassland, as well as the values and interests that people associate with these public lands.

Staff from the Ruckelshaus Institute will facilitate the meeting and USFS staff will be present to interact and listen. Interested public who have ties to the National Grassland or somehow utilize these public lands are encouraged to attend.

The second and third workshops in the series will be held March 16 in Newcastle and May 18 in Gillette, respectively.

This series follows the completion of a Ruckelshaus Institute-produced situation assessment, which was conducted in spring 2015 regarding prairie dog management on the TBNG. Now, the Forest Service is moving forward with development of a long-term, collaborative working group. The purpose of this learning series is to provide substantive and place-based information to this committee, which ultimately will assist the Forest Service in finding adaptive and effective management solutions.

The series will address the past, present and future of the Thunder Basin National Grassland. The objectives of the collaborative learning workshops are to provide stakeholders the opportunity to learn and discuss the history of this National Grassland, explore with scientists' recent research regarding the Grassland, and explore the future of the Grassland. These will be highly interactive workshops which build on each other to provide all stakeholders the opportunity to give meaningful input to the Thunder Basin Working Group.

This approach by the USFS parallels the recently released final report from the Governor's Task Force on Forests, which recommends creation of local collaborative working groups to address local forest management issues.

According to Forest Supervisor Dennis Jaeger, understanding history and how the public values the TBNG can't be under-stated.

"There exists a wealth of public knowledge regarding the history of the Thunder Basin National Grassland and we want to tap into that," said Jaeger. "Knowing the historical and current value that the Grassland holds for the public will ultimately help us make informed decisions.

"As I've stated before, our goal is to ensure the public has a voice in land management decisions and to improve the quality of those decisions."

Results from the afore-mentioned situation assessment are available at the following web site:
www.uwyo.edu/haub/ruckelshaus-institute/collaborative-solutions/thunder-basin/index.html

The TBNG, covering nearly 550,000 acres, is located in northeastern Wyoming in the Powder River Basin between the Big Horn Mountains and the Black Hills. Elevations on the National Grassland range from 3,600 feet to 5,200 feet and the climate is semi-arid.

Wildlife abounds year-round on the National Grassland, while it also provides forage for livestock and is underlain with vast mineral resources. Land patterns are very complex because federal, state and private lands are intermingled.

The National Grassland provides a diverse range of opportunities for recreation including hiking, sightseeing, hunting, fishing and motorized recreation. There are no developed campgrounds; however, dispersed camping is allowed. The Douglas Ranger District (DRD) administers the Thunder Basin National Grassland.

For more information about management of the Thunder Basin National Grassland, contact the DRD at (307) 358-4690 or stop by at 2250 East Richards Street in Douglas between 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Mon.-Fri.

The University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources has a history of assisting agencies with land and resource management issues, most recently assisting the Laramie Ranger District with information gathering on the Pole Mountain road system and facilitating the Governor's Task Force on Forests.

The Ruckelshaus Institute's collaborative solutions program supports natural resource stakeholders, policy makers, and managers in making decisions about the future.

###