



News Release

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
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Decision Memo Signed for Changes to Eastern Snowy Range Seasonal Big Game Road Closures

(LARAMIE, Wyo.) April 28, 2016 – Laramie District Ranger Frank Romero signed a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) decision memo earlier this week to improve crucial big game habitat along the southeast boundary of the Snowy Range.

The decision will extend existing seasonal road closures on the Medicine Bow National Forest, as well as allow installation of new gates to assist with compliance, and place new sections of area roads under seasonal closures.

The project was developed in collaboration with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and specifically for the Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative.

Following is information on the project, which will be implemented this fall:

- Existing seasonal closures will be extended from the current dates of Nov. 15 - April 31 to a longer timeframe of Oct. 1 - June 15 each year. This applies to 37 miles of roads on a narrow section of Forest that runs south from near Lake Owen along the foothills to the Wyoming/Colorado state line.
- Five new gates will be installed at locations which access the seasonally closed roads. These gates are meant to better enforce the closures.
- Additional sections of roads that do not currently have seasonal closures will have seasonal closures applied so that gates can be installed at practical traffic pinch points. Approximately 8.6 total miles of roads will have this new seasonal closure, spread over 10 different sections of road directly adjacent to crucial big game habitat.

“I appreciate all of the people who took time to speak with me in person or send in their comments about this project,” said Laramie District Ranger Frank Romero. “I did a lot of reading and listening, and feel that I heard those both for and against our proposal.

“Ultimately, what led me to this decision is the science that points to how important the habitat is and how herds will benefit from the seasonal closures.

“By working closely with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, I think this decision presents a win-win situation. Big game herds win because they get the habitat and protection they need to prosper, and hunters win because the game they seek is more likely to stay on public land and be more available during hunting season.

“I want to stress that we are not closing the area to the public. The public may still use the area and even drive relatively close to the Forest boundary in most places. Specific to hunting, this decision just changes the location where the walking portion of the hunt starts,” concluded Romero.

“Wyoming Game and Fish Department supports this decision and feels it addresses several of the issues that were brought up during the collaborative Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative meetings,” said Corey Class, WGFD Laramie Wildlife Coordinator. “This is an example of how WGFD and the USFS can work together to improve the quality of wildlife habitat and hunting.”

The area on Forest affected by these closures is critically important to local deer and elk herds as it contains transition habitat, winter range, and fawning and calving areas.

Per direction from the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, the USFS manages these specific areas to provide adequate amounts of quality forage, cover, and solitude for deer, elk, and other species. The areas should provide sufficient habitat and protection from disturbance to support the population and management objectives for transitioning and wintering deer, elk and other species. The Forest Service develops these objectives in consultation with the WGFD.

A comment period was held from late February through late March in order to solicit public input on the project.

Project information, including a map that shows locations of roads with seasonal road closures and gate locations is available on the Medicine Bow National Forest web site at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=47351.

For additional information please contact Frank Romero, District Ranger, at (307) 745-2300 or **feromero@fs.fed.us**. Information can also be obtained by calling the Laramie Ranger District office at the above number, visiting **<http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>** or following the MBRTB on Twitter, **[@FS_MBRTB](https://twitter.com/FS_MBRTB)**.

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