

Ashley National Forest  
Historical Information, Ashley N.F. (1958-1973)  
By. A. R. McConkie

I was transferred to the Ashley National Forest January 26, 1958 to fill the vacancy created by Forest Supervisor Gilbert Doll's transfer to the Regional Office at Ogden. The basic organization at the time of my arrival consisted of 18 full-time employees. My immediate staff was as follows:

Dean C. Rowland, Staff Officer  
Claude L. Bruce, Administrative Assistant  
Gordon Hutton, Project Timber Management

District Rangers at that time were as follows:

Gene L. Kuhns, District Ranger at Manila  
Thomas L. Sevy, District Ranger at Vernal  
G. Val Simpson, District Ranger at Roosevelt  
Richard Leicht, District Ranger at Altonah  
Burt F. Rouse, District Ranger at Duchesne (who at that time had just arrived.)

In 1958 the Forest Supervisor's Office was located on the second floor of the old Vernal Post Office (later remodeled), and so far as I know it had been since the establishment of the Forest Headquarters at Vernal. It consisted of five rooms, one of which was the headquarters of the Vernal Ranger District. The space was very inconvenient, with an entrance up a narrow winding open staircase. Temperatures in the office by actual record often reached 90 to 95 degrees. The building was heated by a manually operated coal furnace. In the winter it was usually very cold in the mornings and reached maximum temperature (too hot) in the afternoon. There was no air conditioning or other artificial circulation of air during the summer months, except small fans.

As our work force expanded in the early 1960's, the Vernal Ranger District was moved from the Post Office Building to the Rexall Building across the street on the second floor. At this time a Forest engineering position was established, occupied by Durray Dalley. The crews and project people working for him were located in the Professional Building above the Vernal Theatre at about 40 East Main Street.

The Ranger District Offices in 1958 were located as follows:

The Manila District occupied a single room frame building located just south of the present office. The residence for the District Ranger at Manila was a storage building, a barn, and a small yard for keeping horses. There was also a double garage and frost-proof building located on this site. The residence had been constructed in the early 1920's by Ranger George Walkup.

The Vernal District Ranger, as indicated above, had his offices in one room of the Forest Supervisor's Office located in the old Post Office Building. A Government-owned residence was located on Second North and Second East in Vernal.

The Roosevelt Ranger District was housed on the second floor of an old apartment house owned by Mr. Frandsen, west of town in Roosevelt. One room plus a kitchen and bath with little or no conversion of the apartment for an office. A residence had been moved down from the Elkhorn site and was located one block west of Main Street (144 South First East).

The Altonah District Ranger Headquarters (office and residence) was located year-long in the old single room office building at Altonah. In 1960-61, the Roosevelt Ranger District Office was moved to the second floor of the Post Office Building on Main Street, and in 1962-63 the Altonah Ranger District headquarters was moved to Roosevelt with joint space occupancy with Roosevelt District in the Roosevelt Post Office Building. A new residence was constructed at 292 North State.

The Duchesne Ranger District Office was a two-room structure about one block south of the present Duchesne District Office, located on the same site as one of the residences constructed by the Forest Service for the occupancy of the District Ranger.

The Forest Supervisor's warehousing area at Vernal consisted of a structure known as the tin house located one-half block north of the Post Office and a one acre lot located near the Armory at Vernal on which stood some old civilian conservation buildings used as storage.

Three old timers had retired in the mid-50's from Service on the Ashley Forest. These were Clyde Lambert, District Ranger on the Altonah Ranger District; Glen Lambert, District Ranger on the Vernal Ranger District; and George Walkup, District Ranger on the Whiterocks Ranger District, later known as the Roosevelt Ranger District after the headquarters were moved from the Elkhorn site to Roosevelt in the early 50s. These three individuals had a total of more than 90 years service on the Ashley. All of them had been outstanding and devoted Forest Rangers. So far as I can determine, their combined service continues to be an all-time record for a single Forest unit.

In 1958 the Ashley National Forest was in the beginning of rapid development and change. The Upper Colorado River Storage Project had been approved in 1956 and funds were being provided for initial construction the multi-million dollar Flaming Gorge Dam. No structural work had actually been started on the dam at the time I first visited the area in 1958, although construction work on the town of Dutch John was well underway. At that time, I watched a crew install a pontoon bridge at the dam site as the first visible construction. The Project Engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation was Gene Walton.

The Vernal-Manila Highway was in various stages of construction to about the Uintah-Daggett county line from the Vernal side. From that point to Manila, travel was entirely over low standard dirt road. Travel from Vernal to Manila required about 3-1/2 hours. Access to the town of Dutch John was by five possible means: (1) from Manila via the Linwood Bridge crossing; (2) the Greendale Junction route via a jeep road and ford across the river; (3) a trail and swinging bridge across the river near Hideout Canyon; (4) an airstrip landing field near the present site of Dutch John; (5) a low standard road through Clay Basin. Because of the difficulty of access, an extremely large herd of deer had built up in this area, and damage to the browse vegetation had occurred. Even though substantial reductions in deer numbers have been made, the evidence of previous overpopulation is still present.

The lower five or six miles of the Whiterocks Road was under contract in 1958, taking the road up the bottom of Whiterocks to just about the confluence with Paradise Creek.

In 1958, also, a large infestation of Engelmann spruce bark beetle occurred in the Duchesne River area, encompassing extensive areas of the Uintah, Wasatch, and Ashley National Forests. The Ashley established control camps at Cold Springs on the Uinta National Forest and at Stockmore. Approximately \$200,000 was expended on the Ashley portion of the project that summer. Garland M. Toland, Forestry Technician, transferred from the Bridger National Forest to provide direct supervision to control activities on the Ashley under the overall direction of Staff Officer Dean C. Rowland. The project was successful and, with a moderate followup the next year, reduced the epidemic to an endemic situation. Large insect control projects were also carried out on the Uinta and Wasatch National Forests.

Also in 1958, the Forest Service was seriously entering the Operation Outdoors Program, and major recreation construction was underway rehabilitating campgrounds throughout the Forest. A classification plan was developed by the Landscape Architect Paul Fritz for the Flaming Gorge Area inside the National Forest and objectives were established. At that time no conclusions had yet been reached as to how the area outside the National Forest would be managed.

Several joint reviews were made by the National Park Service and Forest Service that summer. The course of action by the National Park Service was not firmed up until a year or so later. It was in the fall of 1958 that the definite decision was made by the Forest Service that it would proceed with development of recreation facilities for the Flaming Gorge Area inside the National Forest. Other proposals had been considered including the possibility that the Forest Service should develop the entire area, that the National Park Service would manage the entire area, or that the jurisdiction would remain split between the two agencies.

In the spring of 1959, District Ranger Kuhns was transferred to the Altonah Ranger District, replacing Dick Leicht who moved to the Salmon Forest. At that time Hoyle L. Sorensen transferred from the Wasatch Forest to the Ashley as District Ranger of the Manila District. John F. Tucker was also added to the Forest Supervisor's staff in charge of Range, Wildlife, and Watershed activities. Durray G. Dalley transferred from the Targhee Forest to serve as Forest Engineer on the Ashley. Mr. Dalley was the first full-time Engineer assigned to the Forest.

In 1959 a Range-Watershed study of the High Uintas was undertaken on both the Ashley and Wasatch National Forests. This study required about five years for completion, until 1965. The study was the result of a Forest GII recommendation in 1957 by Van Meter and Anderson that the sheep grazing be removed from the High Uintas.

Rangers and Staff Officers remained about the same until the summer of 1962 when Sorensen moved to the Fishlake Forest and James Bossi moved from the Bridger Forest to the Manila Ranger District. Richard Taylor was also added to the Manila Ranger District staff in November 1963 and Fred LaBar in April 1964. Mr. Taylor replaced Lynn Mitchell as Recreation Forester located at Dutch John to give special services to the Flaming Gorge Area. In 1969, Lowell E. Horton replaced Mr. Tucker on the Forest Supervisor's Staff. Mr. Horton came from the Uinta Forest. Mr. Tucker moved to the Internal Audit staff at Denver.

In the spring of 1963, Secretary Udall and Secretary Freeman reached an agreement commonly known as "Treaty of the Potomac" in which, among other things, it was agreed that the National Park Service would develop and administer that portion of the Flaming Gorge Area outside the National Forest, and the Forest

Service would develop and administer that part of the area inside the National Forest. This procedure was followed until the enactment of the National Recreation Area Legislation on October 1, 1968.

In July of 1963, Al H. Hartong was added as a functional staff officer to handle timber management and fire control activities, allowing Mr. Rowland to give more attention to the increased load of recreation and special uses. This change was also necessary to give more specialized attention to timber management activities.

In the summer of 1963, a contract road construction job was let to oil the Moon Lake road from the Forest boundary to Moon Lake. An impact report was also completed on the Bonneville Phase of the Central Utah Project. The work was largely done by Elmer Boyle, working on the staff of the Forest Supervisors of the Uinta, Ashley, and Wasatch National Forests. A road contract was let in the spring of 1964 for the road improvement of the Sheep Creek road from the bridge near Sheep Creek Gap to Bennett's Ranch.

During the period from 1960 to 1963 development for recreation at Flaming Gorge moved rapidly ahead with access roads, recreation area, and boat ramps. Cedar Springs and Dutch John Boat Ramps were constructed during this period. Campgrounds were constructed at Dripping Springs, Little Hole, and Mustang Ridge.

The Forest Service acquired additional land in Manila, and an office layout, two residences, warehouses, etc, were constructed at Manila in 1963. A District Office at Duchesne was constructed in the spring of 1964 from accelerated work project funds. At this time also the warehouse building was constructed at Vernal near the Armory. In 1965, just before Christmas, the Supervisor's Office was transferred to 437 East Main in Vernal from the second floor of the Post Office.

Numerous personnel changes in the winter of 1965 and 1966 included; (1) Allen Ashton replaced Burt Rouse as District Ranger at Duchesne, (2) Levi Allen replaced Durray Dalley as Forest Engineer, (3) Richard Benjamin replaced James Bossi as District Ranger of the Manila Ranger District in June 1, 1966. The District Ranger's headquarters of the Manila District was moved from Manila to Dutch John at that time to obtain better coordination with the Flaming Gorge project. The Manila Office continued as a detached unit under Assistant Ranger Richard Webster. (4) Administrative Officer John Barr was replaced by Tom Williams, and (5) William F. Davis replaced Lowell Horton as Range Wildlife and Watershed Staff Officer.

On June 16, 1966, the Senate Subcommittee, including Senators Moss and Jordan, visited the Flaming Gorge Area in connection with legislation proposed to establish a National Recreation Area.

On June 9, 1965, a severe flood occurred in Sheep Creek Canyon. The flood was the result of an extremely high snowfall during the winter, followed by a late spring, and then 6 or 7 inches of rainfall falling on the snow. The high waters originated largely from middle elevations when the high density snow, triggered by the heavy rainstorm, converted to water. Water in Sheep Creek was estimated at around 2500 c.f.s. Direct property damage was in excess of \$800,000.

The Sheep Creek flood took the lives of seven people who had been camped in the Palisade Campground and who had not recognized the hazard from the rising water during the night. Six of the bodies were recovered. Those killed were Keith M. Woodruff, Lavon Woodruff, Gerald Woodruff, David Woodruff, Karen Woodruff, Randall Swenson and Paul Swenson.

The newly completed road from Bennett Ranch to Palisade was completely obliterated. It was necessary to construct the creek channel and build an entirely new road grade. The campground at Palisade was entirely

destroyed, and the Moenkopi, Navajo, and Carmel Campgrounds were extensively damaged. The bridges below Palisade and Bennett Ranch were washed out. The newly constructed bridge near Sheep Creek Gap was severely damaged and had to be moved to another location.

The Red Canyon Visitor Center was constructed, and installation of exhibits was completed in the fall of 1965. The Red Canyon Lodge was rebuilt in 1964 and 1965.

Under a cooperative arrangement, the Forest Service took over management of personnel in the Visitor Center at the Flaming Gorge Dam in the spring of 1965.

A package contract for the Bootleg Campground was let in May of 1966. Due to the modern facilities and design of this campground, there were many controversial features.

Extensive improvements of the Pole Creek Road were undertaken in the spring of 1965. The purpose of this road was to open up the timber and multiple use resources in the upper Whiterocks Drainage.

Study was underway from 1963 to 1965 to determine the impacts of the Central Utah Project on the Forest lands and resources. In the spring of 1966, the Forest Service traded some pasture land to the Bureau of Reclamation in Duchesne City to facilitate construction of buildings and housing of people to get the C.U.P. underway.

William Gee replaced Gene Kuhns as District Ranger of the Altonah Ranger District in October 1966.

During 1965 and 1966 a study was made of the High Uintas, and a proposal formulated for the establishment of a High Uintas Wilderness Area under the Wilderness Act. A public meeting was held October 12, 1966 in Salt Lake City with several hundred people in attendance to obtain their views. The proposal was submitted as prescribed by the Wilderness Act. Most of the area included in the proposal had been managed as a Primitive Area for more than 40 years.

The new road into Mustang Ridge Campground was completed in the spring of 1967 as was also the Mustang Ridge Campground, Sheep Creek Bay approach road, parking areas and a 100-foot extension of the Sheep Creek Boat Ramp.

On May 16, 1967, a Team Unit Citation for "superior service for sustained excellence of performance in planning and developing high quality recreation facilities and effective administration at the Flaming Gorge Recreation Area under unusual, complex public pressures and co-ordination requirements" was awarded the Forest. This award was presented at a Forest Service family gathering of about 150 people in the National Guard Armory on June 6, 1967 by Regional Forester Floyd Iverson on behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture Orvel L. Freeman. It was accepted by Forest Supervisor A. R. McConkie.

On October 13, 1967 District Ranger G. Val Simpson, after directing activities on the Roosevelt District for ten years, was transferred to the Cascade District of the Boise Forest. He was replaced at Roosevelt by Donald Hooper on August 27, 1967.

Richard Taylor, Forester (Recreation), serving under the District Forest Ranger at Dutch John, transferred to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation July 9, 1967, and was replaced by Terry Hopson from the Wasatch National

Forest. Richard Webster was succeeded on the Manila District by Paul Kihlmire as Forester at Dutch John. Don S. Goodrich replaced Allen H. Hartong as Fire and Timber Branch Chief in the Supervisor's Office.

The Lodgepole Pine Campground with 34 units was completed on the Vernal Ranger District in September 1968.

On October 1, 1968, the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area was established by Act of Congress. This Act assigned the north unit, which heretofore had been developed and administered by the National Park Service, to the Forest Service and included the additional area in the Ashley National Forest. The Act was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. It added about 120,000 acres to the Ashley and increased our workload substantially.

In September 1970, John R. Glenn replaced Richard Benjamin as District Forest Ranger in charge of the Manila District. Ronald Lisonbee replaced William P. Gee as District Ranger on the Altonah District, and Kirby Lee became Forest Engineer to replace Levi Allen, who transferred to Region 6.

The major construction job in 1969 and 1970 was improvement of the water, sewer, and transportation system in the Cedar Springs area. A large part of our engineering effort went into the design of the East Park access road. A G11 Inspection was made of the forest by Oliver Cliff and Neil Opsal. In the spring of 1971 Regional Forester Iverson retired and was replaced by Vern Hamre. There were many personnel changes on the Forest. Due to the shortage in funds, three engineering personnel and a landscape architect were transferred to other units. Dean C. Rowland retired in March 1971, and Kent Taylor from the Fishlake National Forest succeeded him as Recreation and Lands Branch Chief.

The Manila Ranger District was renamed the Flaming Gorge Ranger District April 9, 1971.

The four Ranger Districts on the Uintah Basin side were combined into three, effective July 1, 1971. This change added the Whiterocks-Dry Fork Watersheds to the Vernal District, and the Rock Creek Drainage to the Duchesne District. Granddaddy Lake and Four Lakes Basin Drainages were already on the Duchesne District. Ronald Lisonbee took over the enlarged District at Roosevelt on that date, and Donald Hooper moved to the Salmon National Forest as District Ranger.

Final completion of the Vernal-Manila Highway occurred in 1971. Ribbon cutting ceremonies were held in Sheep Creek on October 31. This culminated nearly 50 years of effort.

Bill Davis transferred to the Regional Office in Ogden on June 28, 1971, and was replaced by Norman Hack from the Challis National Forest.

District Ranger Thomas Sevy passed away from a heart attack in February 1971, and was replaced by Vaughn E. Francis on April 4, from the Ferron Ranger District, Manti-LaSal National Forest.

1972 was a busy year. The Central Utah Reclamation Project continued to move ahead with completion of the Soldier Creek Dam to enlarge the Strawberry Reservoir. An Environmental Statement on the Bonneville Unit was published and a public meeting was held in Orem. Many environmental impacts were not adequately covered by the statement. The Forest Service made an interdisciplinary study of the impacts and relationships of the project to National Forest land and resources.

The Environmental Protection Act passed about two years earlier required interdisciplinary studies of practically all project activities and proposals. To help accomplish this work, a number of specialists have been added to the Ashley staff. Other units of the C.U.P. are being analyzed as indicated above. A Timber survey was completed on the Ashley in the summer of 1972, and Forester Ron Sanden will be preparing a revised timber management plan during the next year or so.

In the spring of 1972, the Vernal Ranger District headquarters was moved from the second floor of the Rexall or Cooper Building to an improved site on the east side of U-44 about one-half mile north of the highway junction in Vernal.

The East Park road was under construction in 1972 and will be completed in 1973. The Firehole Campground was under construction and will be completed in 1973, except for power installation. Funds for this part were withdrawn, and the use of the campgrounds must await additional funding for power.

During the summer of 1972, six people were reported missing while boating on the Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Their bodies have not been recovered. Two separate accidents were involved. Four people were in one small boat and three in the other, with one survivor. These accidents resulted apparently from improper use and lack of adequate safety equipment in the small boats they were using.

Old time Forest Ranger George Walkup from the old Elkhorn Ranger District passed away in 1972. His wife passed away a few months later. Clyde Lambert, his neighbor, retired Ranger, had died in 1969.

Timber was in good demand in 1972, but the Forest Service was widely criticized for clearcutting. The roadless area report was made and various users and factions made strong cases to support their particular position.

In 1972 the Intermountain Region gave increased attention to comprehensive land use planning. A core team was established to undertake such a study on the Vernal Ranger District as first priority. Andrew Godfrey was in charge of the planning effort, under direction of Kent Taylor, Environmental Coordinator.

All Districts on the Forest have had multiple use plans at various stages of intensity for about 15 years. The comprehensive land use planning system is an outgrowth of these plans.

Industrial expansion in Uintah Basin was very rapid starting in about 1970. Major oil discoveries were made at depths exceeding 15,000 feet. It was reported in 1972 that more drilling was going on in Uintah Basin than in any comparable oil field in North America. Phosphate production which started in the early 1960s north of Vernal was also increasing rapidly. Development of oil shale appeared to be imminent to help overcome the energy crisis. Oil shale deposits available in Uintah Basin are the most extensive known anywhere in the world. Gilsonite also continued to increase in its value. Other hydrocarbons also, such as oil sands and native asphalt, are abundant in the Uintah Basin area and are coming more and more into popular use.

Timber business on the Ashley was on a low key level until the early 1950s. Timber volumes are located mostly in Lodgepole pine types with spruce as secondary. Lodgepole for many years was considered more or less in the weed category. Cutting was done mostly in areas of easy access along the roads. Demand for output from the local mills which were usually located on the Forest was fairly low.

In the mid-50s, the Great Lakes Timber Company moved their sawmill from Hailstone in Wasatch County to Lapoint in Uintah County. This established the first relatively modern mill of significant capacity in the area

with a cut ranging from 3 to 5 million feet per year. Previous to this, the Fabrizo Mill located at Hanna, Wagstaff Mill located at Tabiona, Caldwell and Thomas Mills located at Vernal, and Standard Saddle Tree Mill located also at Vernal were doing most of the harvesting. For quite a number of years the Standard Saddle Tree operation has provided many saddle trees constructed from lodgepole pine and shipped throughout the United States.

In 1969 and 1970 Crofts installed a mill north of Maeser and began a 2x4 stud operation. This mill was transferred to a new owner in the spring of 1973.

Over the years the demand for timber from the Ashley National Forest has been below the allowable annual cut. From small woods operations cutting a few million feet, a high point in timber operation was reached in 1958 when about 16 million feet was cut. This cut tapered off to about 8 to 12 million feet following 1958 and 1959. It began to pick up again as Crofts established their mill north of Vernal. During most of this period of time, a small mill operated also in the Manila area.

By the spring of 1973, a rather sever shortage of softwood lumber had developed in the United States. Prices of lumber had increased significantly and timber became more in demand, both from the Ashley and other National Forests. It appears that in the future, the demand for timber from the Ashley will exceed the annual allowable cut and care will need to be exercised to prevent increasing the mill capacity in this area beyond the ability of the timber to sustain the operation.

During the period of time covered by this brief synopsis, many employees other than those mentioned in the writeup have contributed substantially to management of the Ashley National Forest. A list of current employees on the Forest is attached to this brief history. During this period, Ward C. Evans has acted as C&M Foreman and has made an outstanding contribution. Allen Shippee, Wildlife Biologist, has also been a full-time employee on the Forest since my arrival in 1958.

Funds and personnel limitations have been very severe during this spring of 1973. A number of Forest Service consolidations has been made in the Intermountain Region to cut down overhead costs. The same is true with Ranger District consolidations. Approximately one-third of the Ranger Districts in the Region have been eliminated by consolidating with other units. On April 24, 1973, announcement was made by the Secretary of Agriculture that the Intermountain Regional Headquarters at Ogden would be eliminated. The Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station headquarters at that location would also be moved. These actions, taken together with shortage of funds since the Forest Service will receive in Fiscal Year 1974 an estimated 25% to 30% less funding than in the previous fiscal year, have brought about rather severe crises with many Forest Service employees.

After reviewing this situation, I made the determination to retire from the Federal Service on June 30, 1973, after completion of 40 years service. Retiring also on that date will be Ward Evans, with approximately 35 years service. John M. Wilson will retire on June 9. Mr. Wilson has been the equipment operator on the Forest for some 15 years. These retirements, taken together with numerous others throughout the Region and the Service, may help overcome the problem with the younger Forest Service employees by making available positions for them to fill.

My time on the Ashley and the association with the many Forest Service employees, both those remaining and those come and gone, has been very pleasant. The resources of the Ashley National Forest are now contributing substantially to the benefits of the public. This contribution is expected to increase as better systems of

management and funds are available for their development are obtained.

A. R.MCCONKIE  
Forest Supervisor