

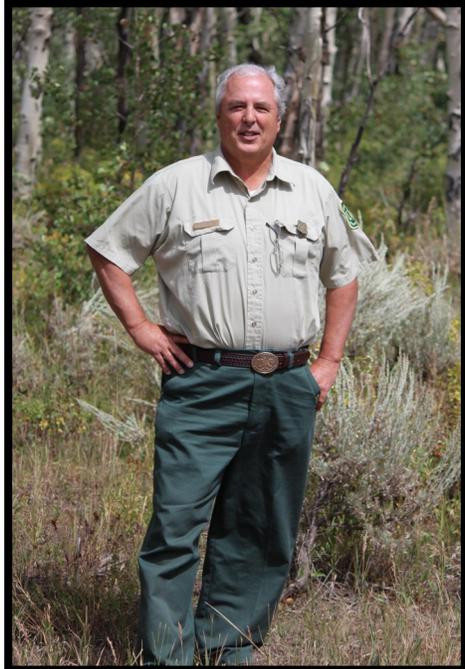
# 2013 Year in Review

Ashley National Forest

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## Forest Supervisor's Letter



John R. Erickson, Forest Supervisor Ashley National Forest

The natural forces that formed the Uinta Mountains created a panorama of geologic conditions, vegetation diversity, wildlife habitat, and waterways that draw approximately 1.1 million visitors to the

Ashley National Forest each year. These conditions provide for multiple uses ranging from wilderness, recreation, livestock grazing, and oil and gas exploration and development.

Safeguarding and sustaining these resources and the diverse activities they provide requires dedicated employees. However, a workforce of hardworking and dedicated employees is not enough. Partnerships with public, state, local governments and other federal agencies are also essential in managing these lands. Working with the Ashley National Forest Resource Advisory Committee, we are working to restore historic guard stations and the last standing historic fire lookout in the state of Utah. Because of these partnerships, these structures will soon be available for public use. Partnerships with Utah County governments in Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah and Sweetwater County in Wyoming provides road maintenance that ensures access to many special places across the Ashley National Forest. Working with the oil and gas industry, the forest completed 44 wells in 2013; providing valued economic opportunities to local communities while protecting visual resources and wildlife such as sage grouse.

I feel honored to care for these valuable public lands, work alongside dedicated employees, and live in this beautiful area.

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## Back Country Horsemen Keep Trails Open



In 2013, the Uinta Basin Chapter of the Back

Country Horsemen continued its long-standing tradition of keeping back country trails open by performing a trail-clearing project

on the Ashley National Forest's Uinta Highline Trail.

Over two weekends, the group cleared over 10 miles of trail. BCH members hiked or rode horses, clearing it of blown down timber and new branch growth that impeded users' ability to ride or hike the trail.

"I was happy when one day as we worked, two hikers passed us using the trail," said member Jody Holmes. "It was rewarding to know that others are using this trail and would have an easier time enjoying it after we had cut the trees out and remarked the route."





L-R: Amanda Baird, Rebecca Perry, and Kelly Laursen

# Gold Cross Ambulance Service Assists the Ashley National Forest

The Gold Cross Ambulance service assisted the Ashley National Forest by providing stand by service during the physical fitness tests given to wildland firefighters in the Vernal, Utah area.

Cheryl Nelson, Uintah Basin Interagency Dispatch Center Manager stated, "Gold Cross Ambulance has provided peace of mind during the administration of our physical tests and greatly aided in ensuring our testing is taking place in the safest environment possible for our firefighters." During the spring of 2013, Gold Cross Ambulance provided emergency coverage for the physical testing of about 65 wildland firefighters from multiple agencies across the Uintah Basin ensuring agencies are prepared for the upcoming fire season.

The Ashley National Forest appreciates the dedication of Gold Cross Ambulance to the mission of providing quality medical care and transportation services during the preparation of wildland firefighters for the 2013 fire season.

## PARTNERSHIPS ON THE ASHLEY ... MAKING A DIFFERENCE

As you visit the Ashley National Forest, you do not need to look very far to see the difference our partners are making in helping accomplish the Forest Service mission of "Caring for the Land and Serving People". Through collaborative efforts with partners, we accomplished a lot this past year. In fact, partnerships are involved in almost every aspect of forest management --from watershed restoration and conservation, to improvements in recreation and transportation.

A recent example is at Lucerne Marina on Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Flaming Gorge is one of the most popular fishing and boating destinations in the State of Utah with Lucerne being the most used boat launch area. Natural topography protects the boat launch and marina areas from westerly and northerly winds. However, uninterrupted winds traveling across the reservoir from the east or southeast can create dangerous waves for boaters trying to recover their boats or dock at the marina.



Wave Attenuator

This summer, through the combined support of several groups and partnerships between the Ashley National Forest including the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Division of Parks and Recreation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Sport Fish Restoration Act and Utah Motorboat Access grant programs, 300 feet of new wave attenuator was installed, with an additional 300 feet scheduled for next year.



Road Maintenance

While many partnerships involve completion of individual projects such as the attenuator at Lucerne, others are ongoing. The Intermountain Natural History Association (INHA) is an example. INHA is a non-profit organization that assists the Forest by providing interpretive information to Forest visitors. They provide and sell books, maps, and other publications at 13 Forest locations. The items enrich the visitor experience and provide a better understanding of the natural and historical Forest resources. With the proceeds from sales, INHA

helped the Forest and neighboring public land agencies install new highway approach signs at 19 scenic byway locations. Decreasing federal budgets coupled with increased forest visitation has led to innovation and creative design in the maintenance of forest roads across the Ashley National Forest. Through teamwork and common goals, road maintenance agreements with Daggett, Duchesne and Uintah Counties in Utah and Sweetwater County in Wyoming have been created to maintain key roads that provide visitor access to the Ashley National Forest.

These are just a few examples of partnerships and collaborative efforts occurring on the Ashley this year. In all, partnerships exist and provide a benefit in almost every aspect of Forest management. Special thanks to these and each of our partners for making a difference.

# Ute Tower Repaired

The only standing fire lookout in the state of Utah is receiving a significant facelift. Ute Mountain Fire Lookout Tower, often called “Ute Tower”, will be open for visitors to experience the view from a historic fire lookout tower in the summer of 2014.

Civilian Conservation Corps from the Sheep Creek Camp (Company # 4794) built Ute Tower in 1937. The U.S. Forest Service used the tower to spot fires until 1968 when aerial detection replaced the need for a fire lookout. In 1969, the Forest Service completed a structural review of the tower and found that the lower portions of its wooden legs were rotting and would need to be replaced. Funds were not available, so the tower closed and remained vacant throughout the 1970s.

In 1980, the Ute Tower was listed on the National Register of Historic Places to increase public awareness of the role of the fire lookout tower for fire detection. Between 1983 and 1986, volunteers and Forest Service employees repaired and replaced deteriorated boards, windows, and roof shingles, removed the lower four feet of each tower leg and spliced in new timber pieces with welded metal braces for support, and painted the entire lookout. In 1987, the Ute Mountain Fire Lookout opened for public visitation at a rededication ceremony.



**Ute Tower on the Ashley National Forest**



**Rotted Legs that were removed from Ute Tower**

Ute Tower is one of the true historic treasures on the Ashley National Forest. The tower is the only remaining freestanding fire lookout in the State of Utah and because of its one-of-a-kind nature, it provides a wonderful opportunity to educate the public about wildland fire activities that occurred in the mid-20th century. With its historic value and proximity to other popular attractions near Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, Ute Tower has typically received over 2,000 visitors a summer. Ute Tower is unique because it has a lookout cab that sits approximately 28 feet above the ground that serves as both an observation post and a living area.

In 2008, the Forest Service again tested the tower legs for structural integrity and found extreme rot and deterioration in both the 1982 replacement sections and in the original tower sections. The Forest Service immediately closed the lookout tower for public safety reasons and it has remained closed for the past five years.

HistoriCorps is a volunteer based organization that works to save historic places. Volunteers interested in helping repair the Ute Tower can register on the HistoriCorps website or contact the HistoriCorps Volunteer Coordinator Amy Eller by email [aeller@historicorps.org](mailto:aeller@historicorps.org) or 303-893-4260 extension 225.

# Oil and Gas Development on the Ashley National Forest

The Ashley National Forest works with leaseholders to recognize their right to drill for, extract, and market oil and natural gas reserves under federal mineral leases. The Forest supports the positive effect this has on the local economy through job creation and minerals receipts, while imposing meaningful constraints and mitigation measures on how this activity will proceed in order to minimize potential environmental impacts.

Issued around 1998, there are two active lease areas for oil and gas on the south unit of the Duchesne/Roosevelt Ranger District on the Ashley National Forest.

The South Unit of the Duchesne/Roosevelt Ranger District currently has 41 pads with approximately 150 wells



drilled by leaseholders, with possibly more pads constructed this fall. The Ashley National Forest has taken many steps to reduce the impacts of oil and gas development on roadless areas and other resources. We have worked with the leaseholders to modify proposals to reduce the number of new well pads and roads in roadless areas by utilizing directional drilling. We have added mitigation measures to reduce impacts to big game, sensitive species, and their habitat.

Prior to 2012, the Ashley National Forest made several decisions allowing for some exploratory drilling for oil and gas and some minor development on the south unit. In February 2012, the Ashley National Forest published a Final Environmental Impact Statement and issued a Record of Decision for oil and gas resource develop-

## Drill Pads on the Ashley National Forest

ment on the Duchesne/Roosevelt Ranger District by one leaseholder. This decision authorized a maximum of 162 well pads and 57 miles of new access road. Up to 356 wells were authorized to be drilled by utilizing directional drilling and placing multiple wells on each pad. Development will occur over 5- to 20-years with 20-40 wells drilled per year.

To allow for the consideration of new technology or information, the larger development project will be phased in over time. Smaller proposals continue to be analyzed and approved for leaseholders.

# Historic Guard Stations Receive Needed Maintenance

With the growing popularity of staying in historic guard stations, the Ashley National Forest Resource Advisory Committee provided funding for the maintenance of two historic guard stations that will be open for public use.

**Paradise Guard Station** is located about 25 miles northwest of Vernal, Utah. The local tale is that the District Ranger built the Paradise Guard Station during his spare time in 1922.

Maintenance activities at the guard station included:

- ◆ replacing the rock and mortar foundation with a new concrete foundation
- ◆ removed lead based paint from the interior of the building and repainted the interior
- ◆ installed a new sub-floor and floor in the building
- ◆ installed a new wood burning stove and replaced the front porch.

Paradise Guard Station should be available for rental in the summer of 2014. For more information on Paradise Guard Station, visit our website.



**Paradise Guard Station**

## Summit Springs Guard Station

Summit Springs Guard Station is located on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District near Ute tower Fire Lookout. The guard station was built in 1931 to house Forest Rangers. Through funding provided by the Ashley National Forest Resource Advisory Committee, Summit Springs Guard Station has been repaired and will be available for public rental.

Maintenance activities at the guard station include:

- ◆ stripping and staining all the floors
- ◆ repainting the walls and trim with historically accurate colors
- ◆ replacing all windows and doors with historically accurate windows and doors
- ◆ replacing the electrical wiring and installing a new propane generator that will charge the battery packs automatically
- ◆ repaired sections of the roof
- ◆ installed historically accurate trim and wall panels
- ◆ installed a double vault toilet to allow for winter use.

Once all of the finish work is complete, the guard station will be available for public rental.

Without the assistance of the Ashley National Forest Resource Advisory Committee, these structures would have continued to deteriorate and the opportunity for public rental would not have been feasible.

# Working Together: Creating Better Opportunities for Everyone

Dry Fork Canyon hosts the most popular non-motorized trail on the Vernal Ranger District.

An investment in enhancing the trail, relocating the trailhead and providing greater parking capacity and improving road access was completed in 2013.

The Dry Fork Flume Trail provides spectacular views of Brownie Canyon as it follows Dry Fork Creek and Brownie Creek. Its popularity is due to easy access and close proximity to Vernal. The trail is widely used by hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and cross-country skiers.



*Uintah County Road Maintenance*

An Eagle Scout project constructed approximately 400ft of post and rail fence along the road across from the trailhead to protect resources.

The Back Country Horsemen volunteered materials and labor to construct and install two horse hitching rails at the trailhead.



**BEFORE:**



Trail work has moved the trail off of the Red Cloud Loop Road and connected all sections of the trail for non-motorized use.

In 2013 the trailhead was moved to the intersection of the Red Cloud Loop Road and the Massey Meadow Road. Through a partnership with Uintah County road surface was improved from the Forest boundary to

the new trailhead and a guard rail was installed. Uintah County agreed to plow the road from the Forest boundary to the new trailhead for winter access. The total cost of these projects was \$74,232.

This creates a year around destination for visitors to enjoy the Flume Trail and access Red Cloud Loop for over-the-snow recreation.

Many partners contributed time and effort in creating this recreation destination.

A Utah trails grant for \$30,000 was used to develop the Flume Trailhead.



**AFTER:**

The Ashley National Forest Youth Conservation Corps crew funded through a partnership with the Uintah County Impact Mitigation District worked on brushing and improving the tread and access from the Trailhead to the trail.

If you haven't had the time to enjoy this trail make plans to enjoy the beauty of Dry Fork this spring.

# ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST STATISTICS

Ashley National Forest Acres:.....1,382,347  
 Acres in Utah:.....1,286,124  
 Acres in Wyoming:.....96,223

**Wilderness Areas Acres**

High Uintas Wilderness  
 Ashley N. F.....276,175  
 High Uintas Wilderness  
 Wasatch Cache N. F..... 180,530

**Recreation**

Campgrounds (Family).....60  
 Campsites.....1,156  
 Campgrounds (Group).....12  
 Picnic Areas.....8  
 Trailheads.....10  
 Total Trail Miles.....1,196  
 ATV (All Terrain Vehicle).....194  
 Biking.....325  
 Hiking.....939  
 Snowmobile.....116  
**Total Road Miles.....1,818**  
 ATV.....1,151

**Employees**

Permanent Employees.....100  
 Temporary/Seasonal..... 91

**Payments to Counties Amount**

Uintah County.....\$292,334.23  
 Duchesne County .....\$476,852.16  
 Daggett County .....\$246,598.08  
 Sweetwater County, WY...\$ 33,076.85  
 Utah County .....\$ 5,263.24  
 Wasatch County .....\$ 60,799.62

**Land Use Permits**

Non-Recreation.116.....\$55,950.50  
 Recreation.....138.....\$335,669.99  
 Power.....5.....\$9,690.99  
 Total Collected.....\$401,311.48

**Fire Management**

Fuel Treatment Acres.....5562  
 Prescribed Burn Acres.....1091  
 Number of Wildfires.....22  
 Wildfire Acres Burned .....685

**Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improved**

*Enhancement (Miles):*

Terrestrial Acres.....2,861  
 Lake Acres .....142  
 Stream Miles.....27

*Surveyed:*

Terrestrial Acres.....441,067  
 Aquatic Acres.....25

**Livestock Grazed**

Horses .....26  
 Cattle .....13,744  
 Sheep .....5,284  
 Head Months Annually .....53.598  
 Allotments/Livestock Areas.....74

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